

CHRISTIAN COURIER

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Issue theme

God prepares a table in the presence of Cancer

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A well-known place for many cancer patients: the chemotherapy clinic.

Most of us dread the big "C" word: "cancer." Those who are diagnosed with this terrible disease also develop a strong dislike for its half-sister: "chemo."

In this issue, we focus on the struggle that those who are told they have cancer engage in. Several women who kept daily journals were willing to share their stories with our readers. These are stories of pain but especially of hope and, yes, even healing. But what emerges in each story is God's incredible faithfulness and the amazingly supportive role that relatives and

friends play in this drama.

One reader describes her experience as a journey through a valley. Psalm 84 comes to mind: "As they pass through the Valley of Baca, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools. They go from strength to strength till each appears before God in Zion."

We have no doubt that these testimonies of suffering and hope will enrich us. All of us must walk through the valley of the shadow of death some day. When we enter that valley, may we fear no evil.

Editor

Opinions divided on small Ontario town slot machines

Reinder Klein

CLINTON, Ont. — Roughly 450 people from Clinton, Ont., and the surrounding area crowded into a school gymnasium on December 2 to hear a panel of six experts speak on the installation of slot machines in this small rural town in the southwestern part of the province.

The odds were even: three of the panelists supported the coming of the gambling machines. Three did not.

Jim Reed, formerly of TV's popular "WS" program and now anchor of News World International, moderated the event that had been organized by the Clinton and District Social Action Committee. The committee is a group of concerned residents headed by Helen Dykstra.

Dykstra's group was well prepared for the event. Its members had become frustrated when, despite growing opposition, it became evident that the town council was going ahead with the installation of the new gambling devices. None of the civic leaders, and least of all the mayor, seemed to be paying any attention to the solid arguments against the devices. "They just won't listen," Dykstra said.

Dreams of money

Back in 1996, when the Ontario government first decided to make slot machines available to municipalities under the Ontario Lottery Corporation, Clinton's town council had already voted to bring slot machines to the town. The council liked the idea of more people coming to their town, spending good money and boosting the local economy.

Dreams of easy revenues danced in their heads. To the councillors it had seemed a "done deal." They were right, but only partially.

Helen Dykstra does not care for slot machines. Neither do many others in Clinton, among them Andrew Blakeley, John Boven, Stewart Friesinga, Gary Haaks, John Huls, Conrad Kuiper, Herman Stryker and Roger Stryker, all of them members of Clinton's social action group. They were not prepared to take the town's decision lying down. Clinton is their town too, and, as they see it, what happens in Clinton is very much their business.

And so, all advocacy efforts having borne no fruit and their repeated calls for a plebiscite on the matter having been rebuffed, they decided to hold a kind of referendum of their own. They prepared a modest questionnaire, distributed it widely and collated the results. The outcome showed that a majority of respondents were opposed to the machines.

Armed with that evidence, the committee approached the town's councillors one more time — to no avail. The Council would not listen. And that is when, and why, the group decided to hold a public information meeting on the issue, and to invite speakers representing both sides of the issue.

Called on expert

In the face of so much government resolve, most people would have tossed in the towel. "You can't fight city hall." But the committee thought

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CANCER

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News

Case against slot machines 'overwhelming'

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otherwise. You can always fight, they believe; but they acknowledge that you don't always win.

So they invited knowledgeable persons to address both sides of the question. Their ace-in-the-hole was one of North America's leading crusaders against gambling. Noted economist Dr. John Warren Kindt is a professor at the University of Illinois where he teaches commerce and legal policy courses. He has held several U.S. state and federal government positions, and was a senior fellow at the London School of Economics.

Kindt is one of few people who has done extensive research on the impact of casinos on select U.S. communities, and he is recognized as probably the foremost opponent of gambling anywhere. Dr. Kindt was eager to participate. He waived his speaker's fee.

Other panelists speaking against slot machines were Norm Corrin, former chair of Citizens for a Casino Free London, and Robert Parr, long time Clinton resident and vice-principal of the local high school.

Their clear and coherently presented objections added a significant moral/ethical dimension to the case against.

Speaking in favor of slots were Jane Holmes, executive director of the Ontario Harness Racing Association, Jim Cronin for the Ontario Lottery Corporation (OLC), and David Jewitt, member of Clinton's Town Council and the area's Deputy Reeve. Predictably, the case in support of slot machines rested entirely on the hoped for economic benefits to the community. But it paid little attention to gambling's social cost.

Scary evidence

As debates go, this one was strictly no contest. Dr. Kindt's presentation, complete with charts, graphs and impressive lists of figures was hugely compelling. Even the OLC's Jim Cronin had to admit that the evidence was "scary." Combined with Norm Corrin's remarks and Robert Parr's observations, the case against slot machines seemed overwhelming.

One statistic Dr. Kindt presented had particular rele-



Members of the Clinton and District Social Action Committee, headed by Helen Dykstra (holding poster).

vance for Clinton. He provided incontrovertible evidence that young people are extremely prone to becoming addicted to gambling, and that within the gambling business itself, electronic devices are the most addictive. The people who run Clinton's racetrack advertise it

as Ontario's Family Track. Yet they claim that children and teenagers will not be welcome.

According to Dr. Kindt, the faster the machine, the more addictive it becomes. That is why the Harris government finally turned its back on VLTs (video lottery terminals). They con-

sidered them too dangerous. Extremely fast, VLTs cannot be slowed down. Slot machines are much slower, and therefore less dangerous. But they can be speeded up!

What will happen in Clinton? "Souped-up" slots (those imbedded with microchips that increase the machine's speed) will come to Clinton. The lure of easy money is just too great, the forces that favor gambling too powerful.

But a feisty little group of Christians spoke up in Clinton, and they did so often, eloquently and well. They served their community with honor, their churches with distinction and their Lord with faithful confidence.

Was their effort a lost cause? Certainly not! The system allowed them to speak for justice, and they had the resources and the conviction to do so. Clinton's social action committee worked hard and well to bring their values to bear on a pressing social issue. Christians in other communities might want to take a page out of their book.

A 'window of opportunity' opens in southern Sudan

Dire warnings of a new famine and incredible stories of revival

Dan Wooding

WHEATON, Ill. — Following a recent visit to violence-torn southern Sudan, Dr. Clive Calver, president of World Relief, the international assistance arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, says, "The light is beginning to shine again in southern Sudan, but darkness could once more

envelope the land."

Calver was speaking after another visit to the country where over 1,000,000 people have died since 1983, over 4,000,000 are displaced and another 2.6 million people face starvation if supplies do not reach their intended relief targets in the coming months.

Calver added, "There's been

an incredibly dark period in that country. We have a window of opportunity. This is the moment we have to touch the lives of the Sudanese people."

One of the places that Calver and his team visited was Pochalla in the Upper Nile province, close to the Ethiopian border. "It is in a war zone not covered by the cease-fire," he said. "It is a river's distance away from government-held territory. Two thirds of the community are women, since the men were lost to war. Government forces have retreated to bases in major towns along the river, so this is now a relatively peaceful area."

Calver and his team were able to see for themselves the amazing growth of the church in that

area. "Two-and-a-half years ago there were no churches in Pochalla," he said. It was a government-held area, and at that time there were about 10,000 Christians, according to a rough estimate given by a community official. On March 23, 1996, the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA) took over the area from government forces, and churches began to have freedom to organize and operate.

500 baptized in a day

"Today there are five churches and 17,000 Christians in a county that has 56,000 residents. The whole community is getting converted bit by bit."

Shortly after Calver, Sudanese

pastor Rueben Abier of the New Sudan Council of Churches and several of the U.S. church leaders entered the Pochalla Presbyterian Church, people started asking to be baptized.

"Before the afternoon was up, more than 500 had been baptized," said Calver. "These were people who had recently come to Christ and were waiting for an opportunity to be baptized. Pochalla has only one trained evangelist and no pastors. God is moving powerfully there." He added, "Follow up, however, is crucial. These believers have very little knowledge, but great warmth and passion."

Calver pointed out that in an animistic society, baptism is a sign of turning away from the spirits and turning to the one true God. "You've got to follow it up with teaching and encouraging these new believers," he said. "World Relief is beginning food and medical relief programs there, and is working to help the churches mature spiritually as they are enabled to further aid their community."

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News/Environment

Commitment to peace theology slipping?

WINNIPEG, Man. (MCC) — Some leaders in the Mennonite community fear that Mennonites' commitment to the church's peace theology is fading.

As one of the three "peace churches" of modern times — the other two being the Society of Friends (Quakers) and the German Baptists (Church of the Brethren since 1908) — the Mennonite church has long followed Jesus' call to be non-violent — to love your enemy.

The church's rejection of violence as an appropriate solution to disputes has led to a commitment by many Mennonites to pacifism. It is also foundational for dozens of organizations across Canada that currently offer victim-offender mediation and help resolve disputes within communities.

Is this historical Mennonite "distinctive" eroding as Mennonites integrate into Canadian culture and into the larger Christian family?

Concern about Mennonite peace theology was a theme emerging from a two-day peace consultation held at the MCC offices in mid-September. It was attended by 18 peace workers from five provinces. The group plans to meet annually.

Little attention

"I felt the Mennonite Brethren had given this relatively little attention in recent years. I don't see a great deal of effort being made to giving a peace message in our congregations," says Harold Jantz, Mennonite Brethren representative to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada board.

Representatives from some other Mennonite church conferences tell a similar story. "I think we're not talking about it very often," says Henry Dueck, past executive secretary and conference minister of the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference (EMMC).

MCC Canada's peace ministries coordinator Tom Snowden, who helped organize the MCC meeting, defines peace as the state of God's shalom or wholeness. He breaks it down to peace with God, peace with oneself, peace with others and peace with the environment.

Evangelism concerns

Jantz said the Mennonite Brethren conference has been concerned sometimes that

emphasizing a peace position might be an impediment to evangelism. It's thought that Mennonite distinctives such as pacifism might turn people off who would otherwise be open to the gospel.

Dueck said evangelical Mennonites can be deeply concerned with planting churches — sometimes to the exclusion of other things. "We forget that what we also need to teach these new Christians is about a peaceable walk."

Dueck said EMMC church members are often influenced by the larger Christian community that doesn't emphasize peace terminology. A large number of young people attend non-Mennonite Bible colleges where such theology isn't a strong focus.

Menno Kroeker, an Evangelical Mennonite Conference (EMC) pastor in Roset, Manitoba, notices some influence from American evangelicalism in his conference. Church members read Christian books from the U.S. and listen to American radio programs, and are sometimes influenced by ideas that wrap Christianity with defending the American way of life, he said.

Jack Suderman, who works with peace and justice issues for the Conference of Mennonites in Canada (CMC), doesn't think it's so much a matter of "lost" peace theology — at least not in CMC circles. "I don't think there ever was a golden era," he said, adding he believes the peace interest is at least as strong as it was in former years.

He said most of the peace agenda in the CMC, however, has been institutionalized. Church-run care homes look after the elderly. MCC takes care of the refugee process. Sunday school curriculum reflects the peace position, and so on.

"In that sense I don't think there has been a lessening of it, but a shifting of it," Suderman said.

Message of reconciliation

Jennifer Mains, a congregational peace worker at Sterling Avenue Mennonite Church in Kitchener, Ontario, however believes that to older church members, peace theology was an integral part of their lives. She thinks that has been lost in a younger generation living comfortable lifestyles.

"I think we base our security

The taxman, the law and the environment

He just struck a good deal, saving himself about \$150 on the sale. We laughed together, my friend and I, as he gave me the details of the negotiation. The seller was willing to bargain. His only requirement: CASH. And then, no GST would be charged.

I agreed with my friend that he had indeed made a good bargain. In all he was saving almost 20 per cent off the original price. Later that evening I started to rethink the deal. What was gained and what was lost in the transaction? I began to wonder if we don't give up more than we gain in deals like this.

My point here is not to make a flap about the Goods and Services Tax which we love to malign. Rather, deals like this remind me of the vital issues we face in the environment today. Regulations seem to be, and sometimes are, onerous. They are a nuisance and they interfere with our normal way of living. New policies can, for instance, deprive us of long-practised activities, or remove the opportunity to convert land to profit.

It is easy to justify our illegal actions and hard to see the point of these new regulations. Canada's new endangered species legislation is like that for some landowners. A few voices are raising fears that the law will unfairly restrict landowners in favor of preserving species.

"If this new law is going to put me at risk," some say, "then we'll take care of the problem another way." Some are following the cynical advice of wags in the U.S. who threaten to "shoot, shovel, and shut-up" about these hapless ("worthless?") creatures.

The logic is simple. If you no longer have a species on your land, you won't be subject to the law. Well, that certainly is one way to solve the problem of endangered species. But like dodging the GST, we may want to consider where it will lead us in the end.

It's not just 'the system'

So what is wrong here? First, we readily see ourselves as victims of a big, impersonal system. It is easy then to try to justify our actions. We say: "The system is too big to notice my small doings"; or "It isn't fair anyway"; and so on. And there lies the heart of the problem.

Who is responsible for fair policy? We all are, both politicians and the public alike. Our

Creation waits...



John Wood

personal actions *do* count. I can't complain about a large national debt and then take money, tax free, out of the formal economy. Nor can I do an end-run around environmental policy and not see consequences in the creation.

There are two targets here. First, the individuals who violate these laws do little to help solve our growing environmental problems. It would be wonderful if everyone voluntarily looked after these creatures. But they do not, and strong legislation is needed.

Second, we must caution the politicians and bureaucrats against making policy that treats people unfairly. If you threaten people's ability to live, to save, to improve their lives, they will lash back. Sound environmental policy must consider people too. It must not simply always opt for species over people. This is a false choice that doesn't help solve any problems.

Impacts mount up

Nor, having said that, do I believe that government should always strive to merely maximize the economy. As a biologist I want to give a caution. We don't easily see the cumulative impact we humans are having on the natural world. Our memories are short, especially since we move so readily from one place to another. Here is the crux of the problem. The kind of monolithic approach we have taken to problem solving, in which the mythical "economy" or "business" always seems to win out, will not do.

We need to learn to recast these questions in terms other than winners and losers. We need to learn to respect each other, and our God-given roles in society. For some of us, that might mean learning to pay our fair share, without complaint. For others, it might be learning to listen to voices telling us to change our ways.

For all of us it means learning to listen to the creation, which has a worth because it came from the hand of God, and a voice of praise independent of our own. And it will mean changing our ways.

John R. Wood teaches environmental science at The King's University College, Edmonton.

on economic security rather than faith," she said. "And that's not what the gospel says." Living comfortable lives contributes to injustice and oppression elsewhere. "The gospel message is not an easy message. It's a counter-culture message."

Jantz also sees the peace message as integral to the gospel. "I think right at the heart of the gospel is reconciliation," he said. Reconciliation with God

leads to reconciliation with ourselves, he explained.

"It's also the basis for reconciliation with others," he continued. "I think we perhaps have thought of the peace position in too-narrow terms."

Dueck said when peace theology is seen simply as refraining from military service, it loses relevance in non-war times. "Because we're not facing that, it doesn't become a very high

priority." He prefers terminology of "peaceable walk" rather than "non-resistance."

Kroeker also suggests non-resistance is a negative term that doesn't attract people. He suggested challenging people to take the positive step of becoming peace makers, rather than being seen as people who just withdraw from conflict. "I think the Bible really calls us to a peace position."

Editorial

Letters from a senior to a junior editor (5)

My Dear Wordgood:

There's no denying that you and I live in a society which is far more pluralistic than the one I grew up in or immigrated to in the '50s. There is a much greater diversity of ethnic, cultural and religious groups in North America than there used to be. Immigration has caused much of that change, but so have increased travel and improved communications technology. Today one can find mosques, temples and pagodas in cities where there used to be only churches and synagogues.

One of the things we should do as Christians when we talk about pluralism is consider it part of reality. There's no point in lamenting a fact. Saying that we have to adjust to living in a pluralistic society is not a confessional statement. Christian political scientist Paul Marshall once said that we should talk about pluralism the way we talk about the weather. There's not much you can do about either one of them.

Vive la difference!

Some people try to stop the diversification process by suggesting that Canada change its immigration policies. If we limit the influx of Muslims and Hindus, they argue, we can prevent a greater religious and cultural hodgepodge and preserve the historic reality that Canada is a country founded mainly on Christian-Judaic

principles and laws. But such a policy would be hard to justify, given that most people immigrate for economic reasons. And is it so bad that we are surrounded by people of different religions and cultures? For one thing, it makes missionary activity a lot cheaper.

Of course, it goes without saying that moving from a fairly homogeneous society to a pluralistic one demands tremendous adjustment. What are the implications for laws, social codes and newspaper coverage, to mention only a few areas? It's especially the public realm that requires adjustments. We note, for example, that prayer has been removed from the public schools and Christmas displays in stores and in front of public buildings are considered inappropriate in a diverse society.

Unbiblical concept

As an understandable reaction to all this, many Christians are urging governments to protect the Christian character of our society. My Dear Wordgood, I don't know whether you are Christian Reformed (I hope you are familiar with Reformed teachings), but a Reformed confession known as the *Belgic Confession* used to say about the task of the government in Article XXXVI: "Their office is not only to have regard unto and watch for the welfare of the civil state, but also that they protect the sacred ministry, and thus may remove and prevent all idolatry and false worship, that the kingdom of Antichrist may thus be destroyed and the kingdom of Christ promoted."

That article was judged to be unbiblical by the Christian Reformed Synod of 1958 and reworded as follows: "The civil rulers have the task, subject to God's law, of removing every obstacle to the preaching of the gospel and to every aspect of divine worship." It added something about "functioning in the sphere entrusted to them, with the means belonging to them." You can clearly see how this article was influenced by Abraham Kuyper's view of limited tasks of various agencies (Abraham Kuyper was a Calvinist and the prime minister of the Netherlands early in this century). The government should not be saddled with the task of removing idolatry and anti-Christian religions from Canadian society.

I don't think this gets us out of the woods entirely. Should we not resist some of the changes that would remove all vestiges of our Christian past?

Focus on freedom can enslave

But let me address a more serious attack on freedom of religion from the liberal establishment. I want to refer to a speech given by Paul Marshall in 1991 at a meeting sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. Liberalism takes freedom as its highest goal and maximizes choice, said Marshall. On the right side of the political spectrum, capitalism wants to remove all barriers to free trade; on the left, socialism wants to remove all barriers to collective welfare. Both are forms of

idolatry and both push religion out of the public realm with their emphasis on "freedom from."

The mistake that liberalism makes is that it does not ask: What is true? What is just? What is faithful? Instead it focuses on wants and needs.

Liberalism, which itself is a value system, places itself over religions and seeks their removal from the public square. According to liberals, pluralism demands the evacuation of faith from schools, politics, courts and marketplace. Religious differences divide us, so let's trivialize differences, and remove them to the private sphere. Marshall calls this the spiritual Vietnam syndrome — remove a village to save it.

What we should plead for is that there be room for all religions in the public sphere — not freedom *from*, but freedom *to* express one's convictions, whether they be liberal convictions, Christian convictions or Muslim convictions. The liberal solution is not a good answer to pluralism, to the problem of co-existence.

The falsity of this homogenizing solution is highlighted by a story which Marshall told. Once upon a time a rabbi approached the Czar and Czarina of Russia to seek peace for his persecuted people. The Czarina suggested: "If all Jews become Christians, there will be peace."

"No," said the rabbi. "Let the Christians become Christians and there will be peace."

The attack on truth

The problem that I foresee, Wordgood, is that because of the prevailing liberal views in society we confuse pluralism with relativism. Just because there are so many different options and religions around, that does not mean that truth is relative, as so many in our society preach.

A Christian apologist named Ravi Zacharias, who himself is a convert from Hinduism, tells university audiences who question him on the exclusive claims of the gospel about the law of non-contradiction (that no statement can be true and false at the same time and in the same relationship). When postmodern thinkers say that the Christian's claim to absolute truth is false, because truth is relative, how do they know that what they say is true? "There are only two kinds of people," says Zacharias; "those who accept dogma and know it, and those who accept dogma and don't know it."

It all makes me think of what Jesus said to his generation when they rejected him as the Messiah: "Wisdom is proved right by all her children." You can't make people believe that the gospel is true. But don't make the mistake of thinking that their rejection weakens the absolute claims of the gospel.

Pluralism means we have to allow others to freely express themselves alongside us in the public square. But it does not mean we have to relativize the truth.

*Faithfully yours,
Truetype*

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Letters/Opinion

Bolt did not belittle diaconal work

Somewhat belatedly I want to thank you for your coverage of the "Changing Workplace — Unchanging Faith" conference jointly sponsored by the Work Research Foundation and the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CC, Oct. 9, front page).

Unfortunately, a press summary gives only a flavor of the actual speeches and

presentations. Perhaps this helps explain the letter from Stephanie Baker Collins (Oct. 30) in which she takes issue with Dr. Bolt's comments on some church leaders' preoccupation with redistributive issues. Attendance at the evening speech, or a reading of the full text, would yield an important distinction.

Bolt took issue with church leaders

who focus primarily on lobbying at the expense of preaching. To quote: "Is it too much to ask the churches of Canada that they address the question of greed as a problem of the soul rather than as one more lobby group (with proof texts) pleading for yet one more version or other of wealth distribution? That's been the pattern in mainline Canadian Christianity: say nothing about the souls and much about economics."

Bolt's presentation did not suggest at all that the redistributive efforts of churches through diaconal or mission-allied efforts, for example, was inap-

propriate. His concern was the church leader whose primary attention was on lobbying government instead of feeding souls. Thus, the weight of his criticism was directed at the question of the central role and task of the church.

Ms. Baker Collins is right in rejoicing when both spiritual and the practical dimensions are addressed by Christians. Her critique of Bolt, however, was misleading.

Ed Pyper

Work Research Foundation
Mississauga, Ont.

The language of love

As the situation in Iraq has deteriorated once again, and recent military strikes have left their impact, I am reminded of the tremendous generosity of the readers of your paper in response to our Jubilee Partners delegation of March 1998.

A second delegation returned from Iraq in October 1998 having delivered over \$75,000 (US) in medicines to children's hospitals. Donations from many of your readers were represented in that shipment of medicine.

The returning delegation confirmed that things remain grim for Iraq's children, and urged us as Christians not to forget these most vulnerable people as

powerful forces around them posture and bring the region once again to the brink of overt war. They communicated how appreciative Iraqi doctors and parents were to see that life-saving medicine.

Iraq's children are God's children and those who follow the Prince of Peace understand that medicine, not bombs, is the language that communicates God's love to them. The many letters I received from sincere readers of *Christian Courier* confirmed that this message of reconciling love is alive and well in your community.

Larry Willms,
Hamilton, Ont.

It's pure gratitude

I am writing in reference to the opinion piece "Keep the R' in praise" (Dec. 11). I am a Pentecostal worshiper, and the reason we praise God loud and long at the beginning of our services is out of pure gratitude for who he is and what he has done for us. God created us to praise him.

I don't understand why Rev.

VanderBeek or any Christian would compare fellow believers (in this case those of us who see all of salvation as a form of co-operation between God and us — God gives, we accept) to a bunch of confused Baal priests coercing pagan gods that don't exist.

Marian den Boer
Hamilton, Ont.

A healing ministry that makes sense

Tony Campolo

I have started to anoint people's heads with oil, lay hands on them and pray for their healing. Unlike the healers I see on television, not much sensational happens. Nevertheless, I do it.

During most Sunday morning preaching services I tell people that if they want me to pray for them for healing, I will give it my best. I tell them that I am not good at this sort of thing and that I don't have any special "gift," as some would claim to possess. But then none of us are really healers. It is God who heals! And there's just no telling what the answer will be if we ask.

"I have tried asking, and I've tried not asking," I say, "And I've found that asking works better." I tell them that I have taken to praying for healing because Jesus told us to, and that I am only trying to be obedient to his command.

What I think have been the most important consequences of this ministry are the ways that people have been blessed by it all — in spite of the rarity of physical healing.

One Sunday I prayed with a man who had an advanced case of cancer. The following Wednesday his wife called me to tell me he had died. When I told her that apparently my prayers didn't do much good, she answered, "Don't say that! They did a lot of good. Before you prayed with him, he was angry with God and filled with fear. But afterwards a peace came over him. The last three days have been among the happiest we have ever had together. And when he left me, he was holding my hand and he said, 'I'll be waiting for you!'"

In a church out West a couple of dozen

people lingered behind after morning worship to receive the anointing and the laying on of hands. The pastor of the church accompanied me as I went from person to person. Surprisingly, only a couple of them had physical ailments. The rest were people with sicknesses of the soul.

There were women who wept over marriages that were coming apart, a man whose life was being consumed by pornography, a teenager who was guilt ridden over an abortion, and several men and women who were suffering from depression.

I was with them for a couple of hours because I refuse to rush these things. I want to share in people's pain. I want to cry with them. And I want to spend long minutes in silence with my hands on their heads, hoping that the Holy Spirit will flow through me into them.

It seemed like nothing special was happening to them, yet it was obvious that it all meant something very special to them. When I finished this healing ministry to these people, I could see that the pastor was upset. He told me, "I've been at this church for 20 years. I thought I knew these people. But as I listened to them talking to you this morning, I realized that I really don't know them at all."

God surprises

So often people come to church and go away without even having had the chance to unburden themselves in a passionately personal way. They hunger to be heard, to be touched, to be healed — especially if the healing that they really seek is the healing of their souls.

I don't know why I didn't start

ministering in this way before. I wonder why every pastor isn't into it. Perhaps it is because we are afraid of looking bad if nothing physical happens. Maybe it is our modern scientific approach to things keeping us from believing that healing really does happen.

I don't know the reasons, but from now on I am going to ask people if they want prayer, and if they do, I will give it a try and leave the result to God. There's just

no telling when God will surprise me with the kind of physical healing that the Catholic saints and so many Pentecostal preachers experience normally, and refer to as miracles.

Tony Campolo is the executive director of the Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education in St. Davids, Pa. He was the sole counsellor with Mr. Clinton on the afternoon of his impeachment, Dec. 18.

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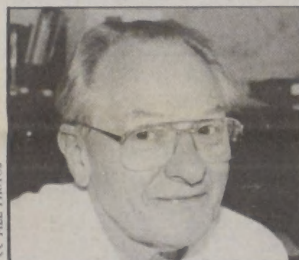
Seven columnists take a bow



Jen vanderBeek



Laura Smit



Andrew Kuyvenhoven

Bert Witvoet

When the board of Reformed Faith Witness, which is the publisher of *Christian Courier*, decided that we would go over to a biweekly schedule this January, we as editorial staff found ourselves in a bit of a pickle. We would require fewer columnists.

It was difficult to decide which columns to retire. We had to keep in mind things like length of run, mix of columns and regional representation.

Faithful workers

Our work was made a little easier when a few columnists themselves indicated a desire to call it a day. Nevertheless, it is with considerable reluctance that we had to ask several columnists to bow out. They did so with much grace.

We certainly owe our faithful contributors a big, heartfelt thank you. Fortunately we are able to extend to them all an invitation to write the occasional article for us.

Thank you, Wayne Brouwer, for your many meditations that were always filled with fascinating examples and anecdotes.

Thank you, Alyce Oosterhuis, for giving creative leadership in the area of Christian education.

Thank you, Maynard VanderGalien, for your down-to-earth and informative columns on farming (how can a farmer not be down-to-earth?).

Thank you, Jacob Kuntz for your longstanding column on church news. Your faithful reading of other magazines helped us open windows to other church communities.



Alyce Oosterhuis

Thank you, Jen vanderBeek, for your happy and intimate look at so many domestic situations. You saw a world in a grain of sand.

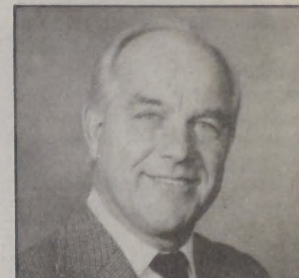
Thank you, Laura Smit, for your thoughtful comments on church and faith life.

And finally, thank you, Andrew Kuyvenhoven, for your wise words on theology, the Bible and the church.

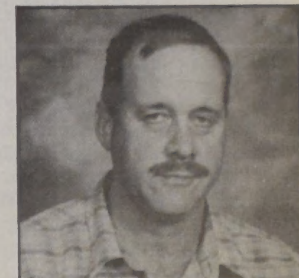
Altogether you raised the level of thought and reflection and encouraged us to keep up the good fight of faith in different areas of life. You will be missed as columnists.

Change is always painful, but it is necessary. We enter this last year of the 20th century with a new approach, which is only the beginning of change. In the coming year you will notice that we have great plans for the future. The end of an era is nearby. You won't recognize the January 2000 issue of *Christian Courier*. But more about that at a later date.

Happy New Year to all of you!



Jacob Kuntz



Maynard VanderGalien



Wayne Brouwer

He heals all our diseases

"Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases" (Ps. 103:2-3, NIV).

"This is Lorraine at the doctor's office. You better come in, Mrs. den Boer. Your blood test shows your thyroid is way out of whack. Are you feeling tired?"

The call came during one of those hectic weeks when Mom's taxi was busy ferrying various family members to and from school, the dentist, the therapist, the doctor and the oral surgeon. There was also that newsletter to design and deliver; several social calls to make; my two-year-old to toilet-train; not to mention the regular groceries, laundry and three washrooms to clean. Who had time to feel tired?

I wasn't one bit tired; that is, until I got off the phone. Then I actually felt somewhat dizzy and all done in. Immediately I went to the kitchen cupboard and took

one of those little thyroid pills the doctor had first prescribed for my under-active thyroid 18 years ago and which I hadn't taken for the past six weeks.

No common sense?

Now some of you might be thinking this kind of thing always happens when good solid Reformed people become emotional, peculiar Pentecostals — they throw away all common sense.

Please let me explain.

One Sunday after the regular church service at the charismatic Pentecostal church where we now worship, I went up for individual prayer; one thing led to another and I ended up asking the woman praying with me to pray for my thyroid.

In the church I go to now we believe that all sickness is bad and it is undeniably God's will for everyone to be healed of every disease. My prayer partner prayed diligently for the healing of my under-active thyroid and

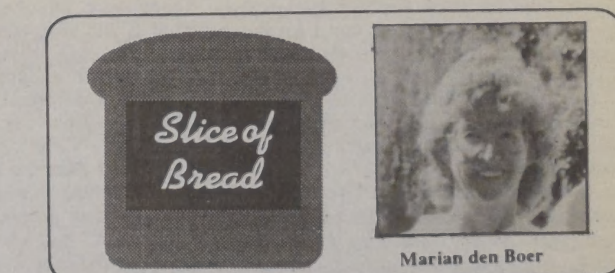
then warned me not to go off my medication. I assured her I wouldn't.

Several weeks later I was at the central library in downtown Hamilton at a Friday night healing service. Gary Whetstone, a pastor of a large church full of the type of people Jesus associated with in his ministry (former thieves, prostitutes, demoniacs, etc.) was ministering to a roomful of Hamiltonians.

What kind of healing?

At one point he walked over to a place on the stage directly in front of me, looked down and said, "This is bothering me. Is there anyone here with a thyroid problem?" — he looked straight at me. I raised my hand and so did the elderly black lady right beside me. He prayed for healing for both of us and rebuked the thing on our thyroids in the name of Jesus. I thought I felt something happen in my throat.

From that day on I stopped taking my medication. But being



Marian den Boer

a responsible Christian as well as ex-Christian Reformed Church-goer, I dutifully phone my doctor to have my thyroid checked. He sent me to the laboratory.

The test came back showing that not only was my thyroid not generating thyroxin, but rather like God continually coaxing an unfruitful Christian to walk in faith, my pituitary was working overtime sending messages to the thyroid to start producing.

Needless to say, the doctor was more than relieved to see me back on medication of my own accord. But he did listen to

my story and is willing to let me go off the medicine once a year for three or four weeks to see if my thyroid has actually begun functioning yet. In the meantime, in faith I am thanking the Lord for my healing.

Why is it the Scribes had trouble believing Jesus could forgive sins (Mark 2:3-12); but today we have trouble believing he heals all our diseases?

Marian den Boer lives with her husband, Marty, and five of their children in Hamilton, Ont. They worship at the Life Centre in Burlington, Ont.

Arts/Media

Film Review

Moses is a not-so-princely 'Prince of Egypt'

Marian Van Til

The Prince of Egypt

Dreamworks Pictures. Featuring the voices of Val Kilmer, Ralph Fiennes, Michelle Pfeiffer, Sandra Bullock, Jeff Goldblum, Danny Glover, Patrick Stewart, Helen Mirren, Steve Martin, Martin Short. Written by Philip LaZebnik. Original songs by Steven Schwartz; score composed by Hans Zimmer. Directed by Brenda Chapman, Steve Hickner, Simon Wells.

It's hard to remember a movie that has been hyped as much as this one has (the first *Batman*, perhaps? or *Jurassic Park*?). And it's hard to live up to hype.

This animated version of the story of Moses's leading the people of Israel out of bondage in Egypt was obviously geared to sweeping in as large an audience of Christians and Jews as possible during the Christmas and Hanukkah season. And it's working. Like a charm.

But is it the "spectacular and profoundly uplifting animated epic" that Dan Wooding, award-winning journalist and director of *ASSIST* (Aid to Special Saints In Strategic Times) says it is? Or "a quantum leap in animation" and a "must-see" movie for all people of faith around the world"? Hardly.

I confess bafflement at statements like Wooding's, and these from Dr. Ted Baehr, chairperson of the Christian Film and Television Commission:

"The story of Moses is so powerfully portrayed on the screen in this movie that one Christian journalist who viewed it said afterward, 'That was like an act of worship.'"

Baehr calls this a "boldly original film"; the artwork is "dramatic," the special effects "incredible" and the music "wonderful."

Baehr concludes that "this a worthy but very different successor to Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*," which forever seared Charlton Heston into our minds as Moses (and Yul Brynner as Pharaoh).

A moving start

It's true that *Prince of Egypt* is an unusual film in that, despite the fact that it emanates from one of Hollywood's major studios, in a very secular and relativistic age it presents, relatively intact and in epic form, a biblical story which demonstrates both the great and mighty wonders of God and great faith on the part of his people.

But while parts of *The Prince*

of Egypt are indeed moving, I cannot myself call it so powerful a portrayal as to be like an act of worship.

True, the first five minutes are quite powerful: the children of Israel are seen quite literally slaving away under the Pharaoh's oppression, a scene accompanied by particularly effective music written and sung in a kind of Hebraic folk style. That is the zenith, and the film's impact is spotty thereafter.

The greatest disappointment, in my view, is the portrayal of Moses; and he is, after all, the main character. The filmmakers say they wanted this great biblical patriarch to become human for modern audiences — a laudable goal. But first he's a kind of young smart aleck, and then something of a wimp (albeit eventually a sensitive one).

Moses's humanity never converges with his faith in a way that eventually makes him the fascinating amalgamation of vulnerable man and powerful prophet and friend of God that the Book of Exodus presents.

More truth, more drama

The general contour of *The Exodus* presented here sticks to the biblical story. The filmmakers would argue that the liberties they did take (which they acknowledge in a written prologue) were for heightened dramatic effect. I would argue that sticking even more closely to the biblical narrative could have been just as dramatic, and often more so.

Some of those changes:

The baby Moses is found by Pharaoh's wife, not his daughter, thus making Moses an adopted son of Pharaoh himself who grows up with Pharaoh's son (one of the Rameseses). Nor does Moses' mother enter the picture as his surreptitious wet nurse (an opportune moment if ever there was one for both drama and delicious humor and satire).

The filmmakers must have reasoned that having Moses



Moses (centre foreground left) confronts Rameses (centre foreground right).

grow up, as he actually did, at slightly greater distance from Pharaoh would lessen the dramatic possibilities. After all, in the movie version it is Moses's "brother" who becomes the Pharaoh to whom Moses makes entreaties to let the Israelites go. (This, incidentally, is also the way *The Ten Commandments* depicts the relationship between Moses and Rameses.)

This decision may be understandable, but it need not have been inevitable. The fact that Moses grew up in Pharaoh's court at all could have been made the most of.

My people?

Another curiosity is that the film Moses does not find out he's really an Israelite until just before he kills the Egyptian overseer whom he sees beating one of his fellow Hebrews. Granted, the Bible doesn't say when Moses became privy to knowledge of his roots, only that "one day, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them at their hard labor..." (NIV) — and recognized them as *his* people.

I believe there would have been greater dramatic possibilities in depicting Moses as having been told by his adoptive mother (Pharaoh's daughter) how he was found as a baby. And thus, as he grew, an ever increasing awareness of his true identity would have grown with him, creating a more profound tension between his Egyptian and Hebrew selves.

The burning bush episode is handled well — as far as it goes

(see related story on p. 23). But again, Scripture presents this astonishing event far more dramatically than does this film. That's largely because the film truncates the episode, leaving out Moses's boldly voiced and repeated objections to carrying out God's rescue mission, and God's running out of patience with Moses so that "the Lord's anger burned against" Moses. This astonishing argument between a man and God is drama *par excellence*.

Also curiously, I think, there is no film role for Moses's brother Aaron, except as complainer. Yet Aaron was a man whom God himself said could speak well (Ex. 4:14), and who would be Moses's co-worker. Inexplicably, the film makes Moses and Aaron ongoing adversaries instead of allies. Aaron plays no role in the appearances before Pharaoh, and nor do the elders of Israel.

When Moses finally goes to Pharaoh, Scripture presents him, along with Aaron, the elders and, indeed all "the people," as firmly believing everything Moses reports about God's impending rescue of them: Moses demonstrates his new powers, they believe that God has seen their misery, and they bow and worship.

No quantum leap

In the film, Moses, though not unbelieving, seems more a wait-and-see kind of guy. Not much of a prince, and still less a prophet. The plagues, and events in general, seem to occur somewhat in spite of him rather than through his leadership as a

spokesperson for God.

As for those other shining adjectives used by Wooding and Baehr (and by several others I've read but haven't named):

The animation most definitely does not represent a "quantum leap" in that art. In fact, the human characters in general I found rather unappealing visually, and their movements stilted. Give me Disney any day in terms of perfection of animation.

Nor are the special effects "incredible." The condensed 10 plagues are engaging, and the parting of the Red Sea is impressive; but *incredible*, that is: beyond credibility, so amazing as to be incomprehensible, no. (I know people commonly use "incredible" as an all-purpose superlative; I do it myself in speech. But spokespersons for Christians should be careful to say what they mean, and to avoid exaggeration.)

All in all, *The Prince of Egypt* is a mixed bag. Some of the music is particularly fine, and may be more responsible for creating rapport with the audience than are the characterizations or much of the "dramatic" action.

I did not find the film, as a whole, to carry exceptional emotional or spiritual impact. Yet I much appreciate the courage shown by DreamWorks Pictures (whose three primaries are practising Jews) in choosing this biblical story for presentation to a biblically illiterate new generation. And we can be assured that God's Word, whether in the Book or in an animated film, will not return to him void.

Church

Conservatives try to push World Council 'back to the Bible'

GENEVA, Switz.(religion-today.com) — Conservatives say they are attempting to bring the worldwide ecumenical movement back into the mainstream of biblical orthodoxy.

A number of conservative groups were among participants in the World Council of Churches 12-day assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The gathering of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox churches ended Dec. 13. The Geneva, Switzerland-based organization links 400 million non-Catholic Christians in more than 100 countries. The assembly meets every seven years.

Conservative groups at the assembly included World Evangelical Fellowship, the Assemblies of God, Latin American Theological Fraternity, the Reichenberg Fellowship, Mennonite World Conference, the Association for Church Renewal, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians.

Concerns not addressed

A diverse mix of conservative theologians, lay delegates, visitors and observers from various continents held several meetings among themselves during the assembly, and agreed that their concerns are not adequately addressed.

Vinay Samuel of the International Fellowship of Evangelical Mission Theologians drafted a letter to WCC leaders praising the faith of many assembly participants and the vitality of worship services, but complaining that conservatives have little influence.

Strayed from its mission

There were no evangelicals among the major speakers at the assembly, and several speakers were "clearly outside of the creedal base" of the WCC, the letter said, according to Janice Shaw Crouse of the Ecumenical Coalition on Women and Society.

The WCC has strayed from its original mission of unifying Christians in order to spread the gospel more effectively, the conservatives say.

"The WCC seems to be captive to Western liberal Protestantism — a small, shrinking minority of Christ's Church — and to its emphasis on individual autonomy and moral

relativity," said Diane Knippers, president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy and a leader of the Association for Church Renewal. "Because these ecumenical gatekeepers do not represent us, we are being systematically denied access to the WCC's great ecumenical project."

The letter also told WCC leaders that "the WCC must operate more in accord with the Christocentric, missionary emphasis of its original vision." The letter stressed the centrality of personal transformation in Christian mission and a biblical view of the Trinity.

Tom Finger of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) said his group supports WCC efforts such as the Program to Overcome Violence, but "we want to ensure that this and other programs maintain a biblical and Christocentric focus."

In spite of deep differences with the WCC, "we will not be alienated from the unity to which we know the Holy Spirit is wooing the churches," Knippers said. "We look forward to greater participation in the quest for unity in Christ, either through a radically reformed WCC or through new avenues we are confident that God will raise up as needed."

No Orthodox or Catholics either

An even bigger problem in the WCC than complaints by Protestants is a crisis involving Eastern Orthodox members. Many Orthodox say they dislike the WCC's theological liberalism and its majority-vote system of decision-making, which leaves them with little influence. The WCC agreed to set up a commission, expected to deliberate for at least three years, to draw up proposals for changes in "structure, style and ethos of the council." The Russian Orthodox Church delegation said it would resume participation in the WCC if it is satisfied with the results, and would withdraw if it is not.

The WCC acted to extend its reach far beyond its 330 member churches. It created a Forum of Christian and Ecumenical Organizations, which potentially could bring together for talks all of the world's main Christian churches and organizations, including many that are not WCC members, such as the Roman

Up the down stairs

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up."
(James 4:10)

Yesterday I watched several children playing in the childcare room of our church. One young girl was attempting to slide down a very small slide at the side of an exercise apparatus. To her chagrin a boy half her size was determined to run up the slide first, and obnoxiously pushed his tiny weight at her, leaving her stunned and helpless.

Riding against the rhythm

It reminded me of the first time my sisters and I saw escalators at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport. One of my younger sisters stepped gingerly on the "up" escalator, only to change her frightened mind as the machine swept her away. By now she was flowing upward faster than she could march down the unforgiving steps. Not only that, but those who stepped onto the escalator after her blocked the path of her longed-for descent, trapping her, wailing, on a ride to "Departures."

Once we learned the system, however, we began to play up and down games on the crossing escalators. If the way was clear the fastest among us could chase the "down" stairs up to the top and leap our way down the "up" escalators to "Arrivals."

Of course, it is very hard to go against the flow. Our own children played the same games when they were younger, and we, as dutiful parents, admonished them appropriately. Yet there are still times when (secretly) I want to try again to "beat the escalator," and prove that even this mechanical apparatus cannot dictate its will over mine.

The will and the woe

Part of that desire comes from my strong-willed disposition. There are times when any challenge in life will energize my will and give me the determination to beat the odds. I once wrestled a pig in a pen of mud at a Canada Day town celebration just because someone said that I, as a young minister, would never do something like that!

A strong will is a funny thing. Dr. James Dobson earned a small fortune from his book *The Strong-Willed Child*, advising parents how to break the will without hurting their children's psyches. At the same time, one of our local successful companies refused to hire a friend of mine (a hard-working genius) because he wasn't "gutsy" enough. The implication was that he didn't have a strong enough will to see a business challenge through to a financially beneficial end.

In faith, too, our wills play a larger part than

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we often suppose. Some people stubbornly believe in trite codes of ethics that they claim to be religious faith, while others meander about holding the sails of their souls to the wind of the latest fads without regard for moral principles.

One stubborn "religious" woman told me to my face that she and her family had gotten rid of other pastors and church staff in the past and they would do the same to our choir director. Another young man bounces from congregation to congregation, and, more recently, from religious faith to religious faith, on the whim of the times and the excitement or the promises of the best religious offers.

Descending into greatness

Jesus said that the greatest act of religious devotion was that we "love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind" (Matt. 22:37). Loving God with our "minds" has to do with thinking clearly about the things of faith and the framework of grace outlined by biblical doctrine. Loving God with our "heart" involves our emotions, and the passions of our lives — allowing them to be reshaped by the glory of the Kingdom.

Loving God with our "soul" is another matter still. It has to do with our wills. Somehow, according to Jesus, whatever it is that drives us onward has to be yoked next to Jesus and become intertwined with his great devotion to the Father.

In the reality of life under the powers that play for our souls that kind of love often means trying to buck the trend and get down the "up" escalator that wants to carry us to a different "Departure" gate.

Bill Hybels called it *Descending into Greatness*, and in his book told stories of those who had found the courage of spirit and the strength of religious will to challenge the patterns of life that had carried them along to places that seemed elevated but lacked eternal substance.

Similarly, when James says to me, "Wayne, humble yourself before the Lord, and he will lift you up," I try to look around me and see which escalator of self-importance I'm riding. Getting down takes a sanctified will.

Wayne Brouwer is a senior pastor at Harderwyk Christian Reformed Church in Holland, Mich. This is Rev. Brouwer's last column for CC, but we hope it will not be the last time he writes for us (see Seven columnists take a bow, p. 6).

NEW YEARS WISHES

The Board of Reformed Faith Witness and the staff of *Christian Courier* extend their thanks for your support in 1998 and best wishes for a joyful and blessed 1999.

Catholic Church, and major Pentecostal and evangelical churches.

Opponents of such a forum said it would produce a "parallel ecumenical structure" that would dilute the WCC's effectiveness.

Church

He's got the whole world in his hand

The Lord sits enthroned over the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forever. May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace! (Psalm 29:10-11)

I have a picture on my desk of an extremely tiny baby being held in a man's hand. The baby must be dangerously premature, for it is not even as long as the hand which holds it, and yet it is a perfectly formed little person, eyes closed in a deep and restful sleep. The picture is both beautiful and disturbing. It inevitably makes people stop and take a closer look.

It is disturbing because it's not right that a child should be that small. However, the all-encompassing hand gives a sense of safety and care, which is reflected in the baby's peaceful face. The picture makes me think of Rilke's poem "Autumn."

*The leaves are falling, falling as from way off,
as though far gardens withered in the skies;
they are falling with denying gestures.*

*And in the nights the heavy earth is falling
from all the stars down into loneliness.*

*We all are falling. This hand falls.
And look at others: it is in them all.*

*And yet there is one who holds this falling
endlessly gently in his hands.*

The most recent newsletter for the organization *Christians in the Visual Arts* has a meditation by artist David Fetcho about the danger of relying too heavily on the metaphors of order as an image for God's work and of chaos for the result of sin. Fetcho asserts: "The metaphor of 'sin as chaos' still thrives, although biblically it has virtually no precedent. Quite the opposite, the most dire occurrences of 'sin' in the Bible stem from excessive efforts to order existence against the (presumed) unknown of God's gratuity...."

"The testimony of Genesis seems to be not that God brings order out of chaos, but that God brings ecology out of chaos. As science now tells us that existence is in a steady chaos state, it would appear that, according to Genesis, existence is the choreography of chaos."

As Rilke puts it, "We all are falling," we as individuals and the whole earth on which we live. Nothing is stable. Nothing is predictable. Nothing is certain. But somehow all the falling is held by God. God does not put an end to our experience of chaos, but he contains, controls and choreographs that experience. God does not pin us to the ground so that we can never fall again, but he holds our falling within his hand.

'Not a tame lion'

One of my favorite psalms is Psalm 29. It celebrates God's power over all other heavenly beings, who are summoned to worship him, and

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over the elements of the world — water, earth and fire. God's power is not seen as the power to still the storm and bring peace to the world, but rather as the power to dominate all the elements of nature.

*The voice of the Lord is over the waters:
the God of glory thunders,
the Lord, over mighty waters....*

*The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars:
the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon....*

The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire.

*The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness:
the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.*

*The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl,
and strips the forest bare;*

and in his temple all say, "Glory!"
(vs. 1, 5, 7-9)

The psalm ends with the Lord enthroned over the flood, dominating the floods, not domesticating them. There is nothing domestic about the One whose voice flashes forth flames of fire. As C. S. Lewis says of Aslan, "He's not a tame lion. He's not safe, but he's good."

Most of the time I'm more interested in safety than in goodness. When I pray to God for protection and help I'm hoping for something other than the choreographing of my life's chaos. I want my life to be tamed and domesticated. I want God to call things to order and bring them under control. I want everything to be predictable and unsurprising.

But this is the God whose voice makes oak trees whirl and leaves cedar trees broken into matchsticks. The proper response to such a voice is to shout back "Glory!" just as the proper response on a roller coaster is to throw up one's hands and scream with delight.

If God's choreography were predictable enough for finite beings such as ourselves to grasp, we would be living in a very dull world. If God's hand around us kept us so safe that nothing uncertain could ever touch us, all the glory and the beauty of the world would have been drained out.

The peace we are promised in this psalm is to rest in the midst of the glory and the beauty of the world, in all our terrifying smallness, knowing that our falling is held in his hand.

Laura Smit, ordained in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is completing a post-doctoral fellowship at Boston University, Boston, Mass. She will take up a teaching position in the religion and theology department at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich., in September 1999.

This is Rev. Smit's last column for CC. We'll miss her unique insight but are happy she will be imparting it to Calvin College students later this year (see Seven take a bow," p. 6).

New German government accepts abortion pill, bishops oppose it

BERLIN (religiontoday.com) — The government of former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl forbade the sale of RU-486, the "abortion pill," but the new German government will allow it, the Associated Press reports. The pill causes a miscarriage if it is taken within the first 49 days of pregnancy.

German Catholic leaders oppose RU-486 and are speaking

out about it. "Playing down abortion by portraying this drug as a more gentle method is unacceptable," said Karl Lehmann of the German bishops' conference. "It remains an illegal killing."

Minister for Women's Affairs Christine Bergmann declined to meet with religious leaders about the issue. "I really don't know what there is to talk about," she said.

New churches spring up weekly in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (religiontoday.com) — Cambodian evangelicals are starting a new church every week. The Khmer Evangelical Association recently planted 13 house churches in three months, *Discipling a Whole Nation* says.

"Hardly anywhere in the 10/40 window are the people so open to the gospel as in

Cambodia," a spokesperson for the ministry said. The "10/40 window" encompasses parts of the Middle East, Asia and North Africa, where most people have never heard the message of Jesus Christ.

There were 70 denominational churches and 10 house churches in Cambodia in 1990; today there are 300 house churches.

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News

A miraculous escape for Sri Lankan Christians

Dan Wooding

LONDON — The leader of several north London churches that contain many refugees from the Sri Lankan civil war has revealed that a group from his churches had a miraculous escape to England from their country. They were turned back from an internal flight that was later shot down in Sri Lanka, and they survived a deadly gun battle at sea.

"The civilians lay in the dark, like sardines in the hold, with the battle raging over their heads. Children were crying, and there was no food or water."

Adrian Hawkes, who is a leader of the "Rainbow churches" linked to the Pioneer network of churches in London, says he has just received firsthand information that some of his church members who returned to Sri Lanka had been able to set up churches in the capital city of Colombo.

They had decided to visit the north of the country to explore the possibility of establishing orphanages, schools and churches there, where the civil war is still raging between the Sinhalese-dominated government troops and the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

The LTTE is a group that seeks to create a separate nation for the Tamil minority in the northern and eastern portions of Sri Lanka.

Fortunately, a missed flight

"Things seemed to have settled down and so three of our main church leaders managed to obtain tickets on one of the now regular flights between Colombo and Jaffna in October," said Pastor Hawkes. "They had a good time there and saw the need, assessing what best we could do to help ordinary people. They were due to fly back to the capital. On arriving at the airport to catch the small plane (of about 50 seats) they were told that although they had booked tickets for the flight, it was full and they would have to come back the next day.

"Very upset, as some of our leaders had other international

flights to catch, they went back to where they had been staying. They discovered later that the plane had been shot down and all on it, including the Russian crew, had been killed. If they had boarded that flight, they too would have been killed."

After this, all flights were cancelled, so the church leaders had to try to find another way to get back to Colombo.

"My team knew they could also go as civilians with the Sinhalese Army, on [the army's] boat," said Hawkes. "This seemed the only option to our church leaders, who needed to be in the capital for all sorts of reasons. The army is obviously scared of taking people on their boat; they might be rebels. So anyone who wants to go has to present themselves to a camp for searching many hours before sailing. This they did.

"After about two days without food and very little water they were put on a boat; it sounds as though they were packed in like the old slave boats used to pack slaves. Two hours out to sea they were attacked by rebel gunboats and holed. They turned round and limped the two hours back into port. Everyone was unloaded back into the camp.

Battle rages on deck

"A couple of days later the army asked for civilian volunteers to try again. Many of the soldiers were going home for their leave and wanted desperately to get out of the peninsula. Around 500 people volunteered to go, including our church leaders. This time the boat made a detour to throw off any rebel gun boats; it also took four gunboats of its own for protection.

Some 20 sea hours later they were again attacked by many rebel gunboats. Their protection vessels were sunk and the soldiers killed or drowned. The rebel boats then began targeting the larger ship. A long battle ensued in which some of the soldiers who were manning ships' guns were killed.

Even though there were 500 civilians on board, many of them old, sick, and young children, and even though many were Tamil people, the rebels still attacked. I think their logic was that if they could kill some government soldiers, then the sacrifice of 500 civilians was worth it.

"The civilians lay in the dark,



A Muslim mosque in Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital

like sardines in the hold, with the battle raging over their heads. Children were crying, and there was no food or water. Finally, after around 33 hours, the ship made it to the Trincomalee port on the rugged northeastern coast. The soldiers were overjoyed; the civilians were almost too sick to even get off the boat, but they made it.

"Our leaders said to me that if it had been another two hours there would have been many more dead children, and older ones too, mainly through lack of water and the intense heat."

Return may mean death

Pastor Hawkes says he has just received the complete story of what occurred as his leaders have only now made it back to the UK. "They still look traumatized," he said. "After hearing their incredible story, I asked them what they thought would happen now and they all told me that they need to go back to Sri Lanka. They believe that the people there need to know about the Kingdom of God. They know they may die, but they realize that this may be the price they have to pay to share the Good News with their people."

Pastor Hawkes explained that

many of them Hindus, but who become open to hear the Kingdom good news because of their many difficult experiences back in the Northern peninsula of Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

"We have now been running these churches for well over 10 years and our congregations continue to grow, and churches plant other churches. However, when there is a slump in the war, and it seems peace is on the way, European countries start to return their refugees back to Sri Lanka.

We felt that we needed to go back to the homeland and establish churches and help there; both for the nationals in the country and to provide a church home for those coming back from places like Switzerland. A few years ago we did just that. We now have two thriving congregations in areas adjacent to Colombo. We also wanted to express a unity for the people, and so in our churches we are striving to have both Tamil and Sinhalese members.

40,000 dead

"Many Tamils still are running away from the Northern Peninsula to Colombo, usually hoping to go further than that by contacting people in Europe and North America. Their living conditions in the capital are often not good, and it's difficult for them to find work. On top of this, the government seems to have been winning the war in the North, and is pressurizing Tamils to return home.

"Up until recently they have been reluctant to do that, for Jaffna had no electricity, the Tigers having blown up the power station, there is no rail connection, as that was treated likewise, plus many houses and infrastructure had been destroyed. On top of all that, like all guerrilla wars, if you speak the wrong language or have the wrong surname you are an immediate suspect of being a rebel, even if you never have had anything to do with such a thought, never mind the actions, and so life becomes cheap."

Since fighting between the two groups began in 1983 in Sri Lanka, about 40,000 people have been killed.

Dan Wooding is a British journalist now living in Southern California with his wife, Norma. He is the founder and international director of ASSIST (Aid to Special Saints in Strategic Times).

the churches he supervises in north London are attended by many nationalities. "Out of this naturally has come an interest in touching the world with the good news of the Kingdom," he said.

"One particular group that has touched us have been the Sri Lankans. Many don't know, but there has been for many years an ethnic war in Sri Lanka, between the majority Sinhalese and the minority (about one third) Tamil. Tamil refugees can be found throughout Europe and North America.

"First coming out of the war situation to other countries was an influx of the younger boys. They were usually suspect by the mainly Sinhalese Army; being of fighting age, they were also prime targets for the Separate "Tiger" groups of LTTE and others. And so if you didn't want to fight, get killed as a rebel, or beaten or killed by the army, best to run away to Europe or North America, or even India, though the killing of the president of India by a Tamil Tiger made that much more difficult.

"We have been successful in opening churches in Switzerland, France and Canada for these mainly Tamil refugees,

Issue theme

With God's help I had peace

Joan Van Kampen

Earlier this year, the author, Joan Van Kampen, 43, of Hamilton, Ont., told her story of living with cancer to a student reporter working for the Burlington Breast Cancer Centre. The story was published in October by the Hamilton Spectator. Joan died a month later, on November 3. Her husband, George, has allowed us to reprint this article.

Most mothers would admit that intimate and honest moments with 16-year-old boys are hard to come by. For me, they are commonplace. If I hear my son's footsteps outside my bedroom at night, I'll call out to him. "Josh, is that you? How was your day?" He'll come into my room and before we know it, we've spent two hours talking.

Exchanges like this with my family and loved ones have always been precious to me. Since I embarked on my battle with cancer in 1993, they have become vital to all of us.

I was stunned when I was first diagnosed with cancer. I was only 38. I considered myself healthy and free of the risks associated with breast cancer. When the initial shock subsided, I told myself I'd simply deal with this fluke. I'd take the treatment and then I'd be fine.

Angry with God

For two years this theory saw me through my mastectomy and the chemotherapy which fol-

lowed. When the treatments ended six months later, I was confident the disease was behind me.

Then the cancer recurred. I was terrified. My strong Christian convictions and positive attitude were not up to this aggressive beast called cancer. I was angry with God, and I do mean angry. I told him that maybe I didn't like him. I asked him why he would do such a thing when I had a husband and three children. I challenged him with, "If you really are this loving God, then why me? Why us? Why?"

When my anger was spent, I gave careful thought to my situation and made up my mind to keep God in my life. I had nothing to gain by keeping him out, and something to gain by allowing him to remain. He has given me a peace that words can't explain.

Five years later, this peace is of infinite value. The cancer has progressed to my brain, despite extensive treatments, and while I fully realize the implications of this — quite simply, I'm dying — I'm still able to resist lapsing into pessimism.

Cancer has invaded my home, but I still have choices. I can tackle this situation as a positive thing or a negative thing. I very consciously try to keep it as positive as I am able.

I am constantly nourished and energized by the close relationships I have with my family,



Joan Van Kampen

friends and God. I still know joy, which puzzles my friends. Even healthcare professionals have said they see something in me that they don't find in a lot of people.

Thankfully, my ability to live with God's peace in my heart has affected my family in a tan-

gible way. It has released us to allow our love and compassion to flow over one another.

We're not afraid to mention death. We remind each other of our method for coping with my disease. We have had our crises and we've come through them with God's help, we will con-

tinue to do so with his help.

This ability to talk freely about my circumstances has played a crucial role in shaping my coping mechanism. I try to encourage the members of my cancer support group to do likewise.

Venting

At first I was frustrated with support groups. So I started a new group that meets every month. We vent our emotions, we pray, we support each other. My own approach has been to just "go for it," to pursue my own ideals and my own goals. I decided to join the Knot A Breast dragon boat team and that's just what I did.

The whole positive thing about living with cancer is that you do live life and you can do these things. I appreciate life's joys through relationships and experiences, but I also recognize life's impermanence.

Even as I go about my day-to-day life, even as I set goals and try to achieve them, I reflect on the philosophy written by one of my fellow cancer patients: "Box the day in. You look at the calendar, and there's the box, and that's your day. And that's where you live — in that space today."

Joan Van Kampen was a mother and hairdresser who with her family belonged to the Ancaster (Ontario) Christian Reformed Church. Her husband and children live in Hamilton, Ont.

School makes death positive

Lesley Simpson

HAMILTON, Ont. — As part of the annual autumn social, a new ritual unfolded on November 13 at Hamilton District Christian High School when the school gym was transformed into a makeshift hair salon. Staff and students volunteered to get "buzzed" to raise money for breast cancer research.

The crop of bald heads that emerged and the money raised for research became one stop in a grieving process, a bittersweet rite of passage. For Nate and Josh Van Kampen, it was a role reversal as they took the clippers and became cutters.

Their mom used to cut their hair, until this summer when her children, 21-year-old Danielle, 18-year-old Nate and 16-year-old Josh were forced to go outside their Hamilton home for haircuts for the first time. She

could no longer work when the cancer she was originally diagnosed with in 1993 spread to her spinal cord and brain and impaired her vision and physical strength.

The cosy place in the basement wasn't a salon in the usual sense. It wasn't a business. It was where friends and family came to chat and came out transformed. And because it was Joan who was cutting, trimming, clipping, creating perms and blowdrying, the cuts always came with conversation. The salon functioned as Joan's "ministry," says her husband, George Van Kampen, a guidance counsellor, teacher and basketball coach at Hamilton District Christian High School (HDCH) in Ancaster, Ont.

The only recent changes are the drying red and ivory roses Danielle brought home from her

mother's funeral. Danielle is a student at McMaster University. Josh and Nate attend HDCH. What did her mother like to talk about?

"What didn't she like to talk about?" answers Danielle, laughing.

The house now seems quiet.

Joan Van Kampen did not accept physical limitations and had a zest for life. This summer Van Kampen beat the drum when she joined the Knot A Breast dragon boat team of female cancer survivors.

The drummer sets the rhythm for paddlers, and Joan was drumming in part because she was no longer able to paddle. When her husband helped her walk after the race, a Toronto neurologist noticed her difficulty and had her in for tests. The race was a Saturday. The tests were Tuesday. That Tuesday

night the family learned the cancer had spread.

"It gave us time to prepare," said George in an interview at the family's Kennedy Avenue home. "Joan had already prepared. She knew."

This summer a pastor friend came to the house and Joan talked about the funeral she wanted. She wanted singing (especially her favorite hymn since Grade 4, "Beautiful Savior") and she wanted reading from Scriptures. She had a strong Christian faith and wanted the community that would come to mourn her to understand what that faith meant to her.

Nate's friends came up with the idea of a fundraiser. They knew Joan's recent admission to Henderson Hospital meant she might not come home, and their friend would grow up without

his mother.

Johan de Zoete and Curtis Visser visited her in the hospital. They saw the woman who used to watch their basketball plays hooked up on tubes; but she still cracked jokes, this time about being too doped up on morphine. "I went there to say hi and to say goodbye," said de Zoete.

Joan used to cut his hair and they would chat about school, basketball, problems that you couldn't talk to other adults about, and her cancer treatment. She wasn't afraid to talk about dying.

This article was reprinted with permission from the Hamilton Spectator. We changed some tenses since the story was written about an upcoming event at HDCH. Lesley Simpson is a reporter at the Spectator.

Issue theme

The valley of cancer

Angie Fast-Vlaar

In July of 1997 my life suddenly changed. I was diagnosed with colon cancer. The unbelievable, which happens to other people, was now happening to us, to my husband, Joe, and me. We have both travelled through valleys before — war, illness, grief — and what we learned then came to mind again: there is only one way to travel through a valley and that is to stay close to God, the shepherd of our souls.

In the Port Dalhousie part of St. Catharines, Ont., we live close to Twelve-Mile Creek. The path of this creek and its valley became a symbol to me of the emotional and spiritual valley we were travelling through. It is my prayer that this sharing of my journey may be a means of encouragement to you, whatever your valley may hold.

July 1

Yesterday I read that all the days ordained for me are written in his book. Today I have a sickening sensation in my gut. Tomorrow I will see my doctor. Yesterday, today, tomorrow, God remains the same!

Hurtled into the valley

After a week of tests and tubes and toilets, my doctor stands at the foot of my bed and says in an everyday voice, "The tumor is malignant." He pats my covered leg and says, "You'll be all right." His words are lost in the reeling room which screams at me from all sick sides: "It's cancer! It's cancer!"

My limbs freeze, but I make them move and drag them down the hall, repeating, to make the truth sink in: "I have cancer, I now have cancer!"

I grope for the telephone. Shaking fingers fumble to find the buttons to press. The ringing starts and stops and his soft voice says, "Hello."

I'm dumb struck, realizing that one word will shatter his joy — his recent-found joy.

The lady behind the counter

We find a little shop that sells the drug-free meat and free-range eggs. Joe calls me over to meet the lady behind the counter. Her dark brown eyes are filled with love as she says, "I had cancer and I am well." Joe's hand is stroking my shoulders as he senses the importance of this first meeting with a survivor in the community of which I now am part. She is one who has gone ahead and is calling back to encourage me. My step grows a little lighter.

The next week we return and as she waits on us she asks,

"What is your name? We have been praying for you all week."

Memories of courage

My hair is thinning fast and I phone Joshua for advice. My 13-year-old grandson replies, "Just get the vacuum cleaner out!" I remember the Sunday afternoon nine years ago when all his hair came out at once. His younger brother got the vacuum to swoosh away the hair; then in a fit of laughter he had placed the hose on Josh's head, creating a moment of comic relief in the midst of a staggering struggle.

I remember the shock of leukemia, the burden of weekly chemotherapy for two years. I remember the brave little boy with "Mr. Hickman" in his chest. I remember his prayers, his favorite hat, his smile; and I say to myself: "If he could do it, so can I."

Pathway to healing

The 10 lepers must have felt foolish walking to Jerusalem all covered with sores. The blind man must have felt ridiculous, eyelids caked with mud, groping to find his way to the pool. Naaman must have felt humiliated, accustomed to carved marble baths filled with sparkling water, now riding to the Jordan to dunk himself seven times in a muddy river.

And how do I feel sitting on a recliner while a nurse pushes a plunger to fill my veins with poison?

I feel sick and bald.

Yet this is my particular path toward healing. So, like the others, I will trust and not be afraid.

I will think of the chemo as Hope. I will pray and eat well, take my pills and thank the Lord for the peace that comes as I, believing, set out on my path-

way to healing.

Alternative medicine

My naturopath is a life-line — literally. She has time to listen and knows the routines and ravages of chemo. She opens her cupboards and selects for me the help I need. Amazing!

My blood count goes up, my energy increases, my bowels settle down and I get a good night's sleep. But why am I surprised? After all, the Lord tells us that "the leaves of the trees are for the healing of nations."

Objections

I'm nauseous before I get to my appointment. It's all in my head, anticipatory. The needle prick is a jab again. The drug starts to seep in and I feel my whole body revolting at this intrusion.

It's like all my cells are crying out "No, no, we are

It's really quite hilarious. The balding men in our family are more than somewhat envious. What they have lost has not grown back, yet I get all this hair.

And what went on inside my skull to make the color change? And who, at this late date, gave me my Grandma's curls?

I just run my fingers through it all and praise the Lord!

Questions

It's gone on for so long that illness and cure are confounded. "Grandma, when did you get chemo?" Meaning, when did you get this terrible disease that keeps you from seeing us?

I cup the serious little face in my hands and explain once more that the cancer is the illness and chemo the cure, but it's chemo that makes me ill.

She crinkles her nose as if to say, "That makes no sense at all." I assure her it will soon be

would get used to them, but that did not occur; and rightly so.

I'm glad my body operates to reject that which is foreign and harmful to it. I pray my soul finds grace to do the same.

Last treatment

I decide to wear a dress for the occasion. Has it really been a year? Joe bought flowers early this morning and I arranged them into a centerpiece with the "Oncology Angels" poem rolled up and stuck among the flowers as our thank-you to the staff.

The head nurse does the honors today while Joe tries to take some pictures. The nurse named Dot comes with a daffodil to pin on my dress: my graduation "diploma." Then it's hugs and thank-yous all around, and we leave the chemotherapy suite — never to return, we pray.

A time of growth

"Every year you grow, you will find me bigger," says Aslan to Lucy in *Prince Caspian* (C.S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*).

These last 16 months have been a time of growth, and, yes, we have found God "bigger" than ever before. Maybe we find him thus because we know him better. We know more of his love, his gentleness, his keeping us in the shelter of his wings.

We know more about prayer, we are more open to the healing miracles in our lives, and we are more aware of our precarious existence here. The spiritual world is more of a reality; heaven is much closer and our loved ones dearer. We are more aware of all the people who have cancer. We are more acquainted with the ravages of the disease and the ravages of the "cure." Having been the recipients of loving care, we are more aware of how important an encouraging word is; how much it means when others care. We more fully understand how God's love comes to us and how his Father's heart aches for the suffering in this world.

Maybe we were led to go through this year of illness so that we might be humbled and see anew just how big "Aslan" is.



The last treatment with head nurse Quenton and nurse "Dot"

whole, we don't deserve to be destroyed! Why should we have to be wiped out just because a few deformed rascals are hiding somewhere?"

The nurse is kind. She gives me another Gravol and phones in yet another prescription for the unrelenting nausea.

Joe holds me close as we walk back through the cold to our van, hoping to get home before the drugs hit full-blast.

New hair!

I now have a mop of dark and white curls (also called grey).

over, just four more weeks. A smile radiates, and with a glint in her eyes she says, "But I do like your hair better now than before!" And then: "Grandma, you will get better, yes? Because I want you to be there when I get married, and when I have babies I want you to hold them." Precious child, your wish is my deep desire.

Tomorrow

Tomorrow is the last treatment, and, strangely, I dread it as much or more than all the others gone before. I thought I

Angie Fast-Vlaar lives with her husband, Joe Vlaar, in Port Dalhousie, a suburb of St. Catharines, Ont.

Issue theme

The tumor

Malignant
damaging
breaking the rules
by which the body
is designed to live.
Growing in seclusion
in darkness
until its menacing
presence is felt.
A malignant, damaging attitude
growing in secrecy
behind the closed doors
of my heart
breaking the rules
by which the Body
is designed to live.
I bring this cancer of my soul
to the cross
to be healed.
I place my cancer-ridden body
into your healing hands
to be made whole
so that body and soul may live
to honor you.



Angie and her husband Joe.

Poems by Angie Fast-Vlaar

Remembrance day

A day to be remembered
always.
The doctor's gentle voice
"There's nothing here.
It's all clear."
I'm wheeled out
lying still
jumping for joy.

The valley of Baca
(Psalm 84)

Today I am reminded
that the pilgrim's path
to Jerusalem
led through a valley.
Real or figurative
they called it
the Valley of Baca
meaning
a place of mourning and grief.
But it says that in their grief
they made the valley
a place of springs.
I hear them say to me:
Dig a well in your valley.
Provide refreshment
for your body, soul and spirit
when the path is hot and dry.
Change your chemo day to Tuesday
and give yourself your weekends back.
Take leisurely baths resplendent
with fragrant oils.
Read a good book in the shade.
Have tea with a best friend.
Take a walk along the water.
Most of all
"Take time to be holy;
Speak oft with your Lord."
Thus you will be enabled
to finish your climb
one step at a time
on your way to Zion.

Transformation

(after reading Kay Arthur)

Our disappointments
are his appointments
change the "d" to "h"
and leave a space
for often it takes some time
before we see the "good"
of his working
conforming us
more and more
into the likeness
of his Son.



Angie spent the summer recuperating in their garden.

Help along the way

Bundles of books
amazing articles
timely advice
if it looks promising
I'll view it.

Healing herbs
cleansing teas
veggies and fruit
beta carotene
the whole diet regime
I'll do it.

Prayer and faith
support and love
visualization
relaxation
a positive spirit
all this will get
me through it.

Health

I rub my eyes
it is so bright
in this fair land of health.
What joy there is
such peace reigns here
and all around such wealth.
I'll never be the same again
having traversed the vale.
Complacency and carelessness
were lost along the way.
A wider love now fills my heart
compassion is renewed.
How quickly now my eyes are moist
when I just hear the "word."
In this fair land of gratefulness
each day is such a gift.
The Master reigns
and I his child
am tripping over my words
of thanks.

Issue theme

My life — a gift, a celebration!

Nellie van Donkersgoed

It was April 14, 1989, and admission to the palliative care ward was *not* on my agenda. I'd merely come to see the brain cancer specialist at Hamilton Henderson Hospital. I had not come to stay.

When the neuro-oncologist summarily ordered a neck collar, assigned me to a hospital bed

Prayer assumed a greater urgency. "Thy will be done" was hard to reconcile with "Please, God, I want my life back."

and moved on to his next appointment, I refused to go. First, an explanation, I demanded. After all, I am still a person, not a statistic. (*Not yet!*)

So he took the time to reappear and describe what he believed to be a brain tumor which could at any moment catapult me into paralysis.

Reality is comforting in a bizarre kind of way. It was oddly comforting to know that all this pain had a name after all — the tongue paralysis, the blurred vision, the shooting pain in my side, the long nights of agony and wakefulness — all of it was real.

It was also terrifying.

I thought I knew what melanoma was. My GP's reaction to that first ulcerated mole 10 years earlier, the urgency of the subsequent biopsy, the suggestion that I participate in a double-blind clinical study, made it clear that this was no disease to disregard.

By 1987, other than a sizeable scar on my leg, I thought I was out of the woods. I taught kindergarten, served on the Drayton, Ontario, village council and was engrossed with renovating our home and bringing up our three children. We left the village of Drayton and moved to the city of Guelph.

A new file

By March of 1989 I'd become a regular user of Ontario's healthcare system: a series of surgical procedures were necessary to remove recurring tumors and adjacent lymph nodes. Elbert, my husband, re-arranged

his busy schedule to shuttle me from GP to surgeon, X-ray to catscan, clinic to clinic.

Elbert added a new section to our home filing system: title, "Nellie's Cancer"; subtitle: "Melanoma." Later — much later — we would add a third file.

We acquired a whole new vocabulary: biopsy, incision, excision, resection, metastases, palliation. I love words, but these words had no beauty, and I didn't want to know any of them.

In three months our lives had been turned upside down. We took our Guelph home off the real estate market, broke the lease arrangements we had made for a season, and stopped planning. We stopped talking about next summer, next year, graduation and retirement. The scope of our conversation shrank to the present, the immediate: the next symptom, the next appointment.

Prayer assumed a greater urgency. "Thy will be done" was hard to reconcile with "Please, God, I want my life back"; with "Please, God, just give me until Cara's through high school...."

In the latter months of 1988 and the first months of 1989 I sandwiched visits to the Hamilton Cancer Clinic between workdays. I scheduled doses of levamisole, an experimental drug to boost the immune system, so that I could throw up on the weekend and show up for work on Monday morning. I swallowed enough Tylenol to qualify for honorary shareholder in the company. I collapsed into bed at night and crawled out of it each morning.

Grim outlook

All this time, in the back of my mind, were these words from an information brochure on melanoma, "There is no satisfactory standard treatment for Stage IV melanoma cancer."

And: "Melanoma metastatic to distant lymph node bearing areas may be palliated by regional lymphadenectomy. Isolated metastases to the lungs, GI (gastro-intestinal) tract, bone or occasionally to the brain may be palliated by resection with occasional long survival. Radiation therapy may provide symptomatic relief for metastases to brain, bones and viscera. Advanced melanoma is



A grandchild becomes very precious.

refractory to most standard systemic therapy. Partial response rate to anti-tumour agents is approximately 20 per cent, and generally lasts less than six months."

Layperson's translation: "Lady, your chances don't look good!"

By March 1989 my throat was swollen and feverish. When it began to feel as though breathing might not be an option, I telephoned the emergency department of the local hospital. A bland, reassuring voice suggested I calm down, breathe deeply and see what things were like in the morning.

Morning came; by now my tongue was partially paralyzed and I had *not* calmed down. I've always loved words, as I said; and precise diction; but now many words came with difficulty. So I refused to speak. If I couldn't speak properly, I wouldn't speak at all. When I ate, the food disappeared into regions my tongue could no longer reach. Meals deteriorated into unpleasant hunting expeditions.

The day came when I told my husband, "I just can't do this anymore!" But one second followed another, and another, and I was still alive....

April came. And finally, on April 14, 1989, I let the neuro-oncologist admit me to the

palliative care ward at Hamilton Henderson Hospital. I didn't ask about tomorrow. I watched the lady in the bed across from me. She wanted to die and would no longer speak to her husband. Later, he would weep at my bedside.

I wandered the halls, but doing nothing is foreign to my nature. A nurse would order me back to my bed. I figured that as long as I could walk the halls I was still normal, still alive.

Sunday, April 16. My extended family converged on my room. My sudden relapse triggered an impromptu and long-overdue family reunion.

Tuesday, April 18. Elbert picked me up for an appointment at St. Joseph's Hospital, London, Ontario, where an MRI scan would recreate a 3-D image of my brain.

Attempts at normality

We were still determined that life could be lived. We went shopping on our way to the hospital; I bought an expensive night-gown and a small gift for my hospital roommate. We detoured to a wonderful motel room just off Highway 401 and made love with passion and desperation. MRI scan completed, we lingered over dinner at an elegant restaurant. Life is to be lived, after all.

Wednesday, April 19. The

morning began badly. I blamed the sick feeling in my gut on the exertions of the day before.

Yes, I assured the nurse, I could manage my own shower. The tub room door closed; the nurse left without switching on the light. Moments later, I collapsed in a corner of the shower room stall, with just enough sense to push the call-bell on the way down. A nurse opened the door and at first didn't see me lying in the dark.

Bad test results

After this, the story becomes less mine and more that of others.

My husband's increasingly cryptic notes in his planner read: — *Nellie admitted to intensive care with uncontrolled bleeding from the liver.*

— *Nellie packed in ice for most of the day.*

— *Nellie put on morphine to control the pain.*

— *At end of day Nellie is stable but very weak.*

Thursday, April 20. All the test reports were bad. The melanoma had indeed spread to liver, lungs, kidney, brain. Some tumors were three to five centimetres in diameter. The experts told us what we already knew: there are no effective therapies for melanoma cancer. They offered to keep me comfortable with morphine for the remaining

two to six weeks of my life. Some menu. Some life.

I was not ready to shuffle off this "mortal coil"; not yet.

"I'm not ready," I whispered to my father, "I haven't done enough." His loving answer stayed with me: "Nellie, you've done more in your 41 years than most people do in a lifetime."

Make her comfortable

Our former GP and personal friend from the village of Drayton came to visit. Over the years he had earned our respect for his aggressive and creative approach to medical intervention. Elbert decided to have me transferred to Dr. Veenstra's care.

The professionals at Henderson were offended and puzzled. Was this a challenge of their professional judgement? My husband focused on reality. If nothing more could be done, at least friends and family would be within visiting range. I was sent by ambulance to the small town hospital in Palmerston, a short hour west of Guelph.

April 28. The nurse at Henderson wept as I said goodbye. I was still a person, after all.

Dr. Veenstra prescribed a cocktail of medications that included steroids and painkillers. He extended his hospital rounds to spend precious time at my bedside.

Cancer completely rearranged my husband's schedule. His daytimer entries revolved around two phrases: "Drive to hospital"; "Visit Nel." Under the heading "Personal priorities for the month of May 1989" there was just one entry: "Make Nellie comfortable."

My parents moved in to look after the household. My eldest daughter sent me handmade postcards from college in Michigan. My teenaged son asked me often: "How are you doing, Mom?" and patted my shoulder. My youngest daughter, bewildered and anxious, wouldn't speak to me. Elbert revised my will.

On May 9 I was sent home under the Home Care program. My world was reduced to a hospital bed in the dining room, with an IV apparatus on standby in the closet.

The days passed. I lived.

Then Dr. Veenstra suggested that we consider an experimen-

tal and unconventional treatment option and gave us the telephone number of the Falk Oncology Centre in Toronto.

Doing nothing has never been an option for either Elbert or me, and the possibility of the Falk Oncology Centre had our undivided attention.

Elbert drove from hospital to hospital gathering previous X-rays, films and medical records. My father's Jetta, with its adjustable seats, was pressed into service as my personal taxi, and on May 15 I was assessed by Dr. Falk.

In the midst of catastrophe, there was still some humor. Elbert's planner read: "May 15: Nel is asked this question on the patient information form, 'Have you ever had a heart condition?' Her answer: 'Yes, if that includes falling in love.'"

Initially reluctant to take on a patient with so widespread a melanoma, Dr. Falk consented to treat me on the condition that there be an encouraging response after an initial five-day treatment session.

There was. The response was clear enough to merit Dr. Falk's further time and energy. For us, there emerged a tiny glimmer of hope after all.

A new chapter

And so began the next chapter of my life, which revolved around treatment sessions at the centre. A kaleidoscope of images jostle one another:

— The agonizing journey by wheelchair from the Delta Chelsea Inn to 700 Bay Street;

— The "early bird" board, which allowed the first patient to arrive and log in to be the first patient plugged into the IV line;

— Nurse Emily with tears in her eyes when once again the veins in my arm would evade her probing needle;

— The lounge filled with a constant stream of patients living on little more than hope and faith;

— The sweat oozing from my pores during those seemingly endless hyperthermia sessions;

— Shawn, Dr. Falk's irreplaceable, freewheeling dog;

— The sounds of vomiting, of weeping, of silence;

— The constant inner battle to keep a sense of identity;

— Nurse Miriam's recipes for blueberry muffins and her wonderful selection of footwear;

— The nausea, the lethargy, the horrible smell of chemicals that permeate the skin;

— The easy intimacy with total strangers;

— The bravery of the disfigured, the damaged, the dying;

— The unfailing professionalism of the staff at the Falk Centre.

Through this tapestry of images was woven one thread —

one small task a day, even if that task was no more than a batch of freshly baked muffins or a load of laundry. I cried a lot and burdened my husband with my rage and frustration.

Since this alternative treatment was not covered by the province's healthcare program, the bills skyrocketed, for us a monumental sum. I sold my Cavalier wagon reluctantly. Our

word "Hallelujah" during church, which I attended for the first time in six months. Finally, on January 23, 1991, this entry in Dr. Falk's correspondence: "She appears to be in complete remission, and we will follow her."

On May 1, 1991, all follow-up tests were negative. Included in the radiologist's report were two phrases: "Lungs clear; heart and mediastinum unremarkable: OPINION: an essentially normal examination."

The third file

Ten years have passed since melanoma invaded my life and the lives of my family members.

I consider my life remarkable, a gift, a celebration! Our eldest daughter is now a college graduate, married, and a potter by profession. Our son, also a college graduate, has a life of his own and a special place in my heart. Cara, our youngest daughter, indeed graduated from high school and has become a beautiful and thoughtful young lady who is studying microbiology, with a keen interest in human genetics and infectious diseases.

Elbert's planner currently itemizes an ambitious list of personal priorities that have nothing to do with cancer. An then there's Tyas, our first and cherished grandson, who lights up every corner of my heart.

And that third file has been added to our collection on cancer; filename: "Nellie's Story."

I've been able to tell you that story myself. For that I am deeply thankful:

— To my Lord who led me through the valley of the shadow of death;

— to my husband who dared to explore all the possibilities;

— to my family and friends who were there for me;

— to that very special GP who suggested the unconventional;

— and to Dr. Falk and his staff at the centre, uncompromising in their willingness to shift the cancer paradigm.



Elbert and Nellie van Donkersgoed at a meeting of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

the melanoma responded to Dr. Falk's protocol. Little by little, the tumours began to shrink. My immune system was fighting its way back into control.

On June 30, 1989, the following entry is contained in Dr. Falk's records: "This patient has improved dramatically. A most unusual response for a diffuse and disseminated malignant melanoma. In part, this is related to the patient's extraordinarily good motivation. However, I think it can also be attributed to the use of the penetrating carrier molecules which would expedite the entrance of various drugs that we have used, into the tumor."

A time of limitations

Dr. Falk was able to extend the span of time between treatments; and as the months went on, to shorten the treatments as well. That's not to say life was simple. I felt diminished as a person: drugged, helpless, unproductive, unattractive. I challenged myself to complete just

church and community was as faithful in giving as it had been in prayer. Their gifts eased our financial worries.

Elbert spent many hours in his armchair beside my bed. He cajoled me into daily walks, step by step, day by day. Family and friends kept in constant touch. One perceptive friend brought her newborn daughter, silken, warm and beautiful, for me to hold. Others laughed with me, and wept with me.

I became addicted to the leritene I was taking for pain. It would be more than a year before I would go cold turkey, against the advice of my GP, who assumed I would always need a steady diet of painkillers.

Life became possible after all. Elbert and I found joy in renewing the intimacy we had last stolen on that bittersweet Tuesday afternoon in April. The hospital bed disappeared from the dining room. We spent a week at our favourite holiday cottage. I found myself able to twist my tongue around the

Nellie van Donkersgoed's determination to "complete one small task a day" led to an exploration of desktop publishing. Today, Nellie edits and designs Earth-keeping Ontario, a quarterly, full-color magazine for the members and friends of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, an organization of which her husband is executive director.

Justice

Needed: A Baltic 'Nuremberg'

Vytas Stoskus

I agree with Czech President Vaclav Havel that everyone in Eastern and Central Europe must bear some blame for the brutal communist system having survived as long as it did because they, individually, did not do enough to change or end it. I, however, disagree with his view that lengthy, expensive trials will have a deleterious effect on trust and interpersonal relations in the former communist countries. Justice must accompany the passage of time in order to foster reconciliation.

Lithuania's soul is severely dysfunctional; public discourse is just beginning regarding the role played by locals collaborating with the occupying Nazis and Soviets.

I grew up and lived in the U.S. for 45 years. Working as a human relations consultant, conflict mediator, social worker, probation officer and educator, I saw the long-term impact of America's violent and hate-filled past of slavery, the forced removal and slaughter of Native Americans, and the internment of Japanese Americans in "relocation centers" during WWII.

These wounds continue to fester and to sabotage the improvement of race relations, often with a subtlety undetectable until too late. Dealing incompletely and inadequately with our tragic history has benefited only the guilty and those who would do likewise, encouraged further disregard of others' rights; it has delayed the healing of injuries; prevented the restoration of the victims' dignity; given justice a bad name; and eroded trust in one's community and government. Ignoring massive past wrongs eats away from within.

Repairing such damage will require enormous concerted effort. Recurring racism shows that pain does not diminish and justice does not automatically appear merely with the passage of time.

The descendants of German Nazis, another example, are now suffering tremendous emotional

anguish as they reflect on the Holocaust their parents and grandparents carried out five and six decades ago in the name of racial purity. Recent studies have found Germans to have one of the lowest levels of self-esteem worldwide.

Intimidation and fear

Since 1994 I have lived in Lithuania, a country which was a former involuntary member of the Soviet Union, where, on the surface, ethnic relations seem tranquil. Crimes of the KGB are sighed over, some tears are shed, some compensations paid. Underneath, however, boils a cauldron fueled by memories of families and communities torn apart by emigration, persecution, torture, death, and what many saw as a fate worse than death: deportation to Siberia.

Reactions to the recent unearthing in Riga, Latvia, of the remains of 25 male skeletons, some with bullet holes in their skulls, attest to the terror with which the decades of occupation are still remembered. When questioned about what had transpired there, many local residents denied any knowledge of the site. Fear of retribution for divulging incriminating information did not exit with the last Soviet troops years ago; former communists and their sympathizers haunt the road to an open, participatory democracy.

A just society cannot be built on intimidation and apprehensions. Perpetrators of the wrongs of those times must be removed from positions from which they can silence someone or withhold a person's rights. Everyone must be free to speak without danger of reprisal. Psychologist John Bradshaw, an expert on dysfunctional families, has observed that the greater the secrets, the greater the disease.

Still in denial

Lithuania's soul is severely dysfunctional; public discourse is just beginning regarding the role played by locals collaborating with the occupying Nazis

and Soviets. Though the killing of Jews during WWII was more blatant in Lithuania than in Germany and most other countries involved in the genocide, the Lithuanians are still denying this, claiming they saw people being rounded up but had "no idea what was happening."

The astronomical suicide and alcoholism rates in Lithuania, I

the Soviet Era, when migration between the diverse republics within the USSR was fostered in order to dilute concentrations of ethnic minorities. The few African-Americans present are basketball players, and, ironically, despite their color, have attained heroic stature among the basketball-crazed population.

Unanswered questions about



Jews being herded into freight cars and deported to Eastern Europe during the Second World War.

suspect, are not just from the pervading sense of hopelessness among the poor, elderly, underemployed and incapacitated, but also reflect the shame of some and the denial of others regarding their activities, or at least their complicity with the repression and savagery, during Nazi and Soviet times.

Though it is vehemently denied, Lithuania has serious unresolved issues between its dominant, nationalistic Lithuanian majority and its two primary minorities, Russians and Poles. Anti-Semitism still runs deep and dark. The subject is hushed, but surfaces unexpectedly as my human relations workshops probe feelings and values; I also often see swastikas painted on walls around Vilnius, Lithuania's capital.

Little trust

A strong anti-Gypsy sentiment is more obvious, as is the distrust and demeaning of others with darker skin, these primarily being Azerbaijanis, Armenians and Georgians. These groups came to Lithuania from beyond the Caucasus Mountains during

atrocities committed in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania by both invaders and locals during 50 years of foreign occupation are sabotaging interpersonal relations and trust. An undertow of unresolved pain and hatred surfaces regularly as rudeness and insensitivity, often sneaking up and having an impact on seemingly unrelated issues.

Without a public cleansing, this distrust and suspicion will continue to govern attitudes and behavior, as was evidenced in the recent Lithuanian presidential election. A top contender, young, progressive and well-liked, lost. His close ties to the old communists and his skeleton-in-the-closet father, a one-time KGB agent, were too much for the electorate. These associations, rather than his abilities or experience, were his downfall.

An unappetizing task

Dealing with unfinished business is an unappetizing task which healing requires. Searching for justice prompts discussion among differing viewpoints and forces re-evaluation of one's

deeply held beliefs. More importantly, it encourages a more assertive, less fearful and clearer thinking populace, which is the surest safeguard against the emergence of future demagoguery.

International attention needs to be directed at uncovering what happened in Central and Eastern Europe from the '30s through the '80s to forestall recurrences. The wars in former Yugoslavia are just a mild preview of what can happen throughout the former Soviet Empire if old suspicions and injuries are ignored.

U.S. Congressmen Tom Lantos, Benjamin A. Gilman, John Edward Porter and John Lewis, concerned about human relations in the Baltics, recently sent a formal letter thanking Estonian President Lennart Meri for his intention to set up a commission to investigate crimes against humanity committed in Estonia during the Nazi and Soviet occupations.

Their joint action is commendable. It's reassuring to know that the indiscriminate scramble in the U.S. to make friends with Russia and its millions of potential consumers does not obscure the urgency of reviving justice in what were once unwilling parts of the Soviet Empire, an expanded, revised, 20th century version of an equally evil Czarist Russian Empire.

It's encouraging that Lithuania's new president, Valdas Adamkus, a WWII refugee who spent most of his adult years living in Chicago's Lithuanian community and working for the U.S. government as an Environmental Protection Agency administrator, has followed his Estonian counterpart's lead. I believe his appointing of a commission to examine abuses of the Nazi and Soviet regimes in Lithuania will help soften some of the remaining bitterness and dispel continuing fears.

Just as some of Germany's top Nazis were tried at Nuremberg, just as Chile's Pinochet will be held to account for his atrocities, so also must be those who terrorized half a continent for half a century. Trust will not be restored by silence and the passage of more time.

Vytas Stoskus lives in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Comment

*Where's the passion of Generation X?**Dear Peter:*

At the year's end my mailbox was full of fundraising appeals and I tried to balance my chequebook between fulfilling what I felt to be my charitable obligations and the realities of paying my bills.

Do you ever have this problem? I wrestle with it every year. And then comes the really fun part when I start taking guilt trips: "Elizabeth, if you can afford those symphony tickets, you really should be able to give more."

In November I attended a celebratory evening for Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ). I've been a member ever since their current membership co-ordinator, Bruce Voogd, hijacked me for a donation in the cafeteria of The King's College in Edmonton, where we were both students. Many years later I was asked why I joined a social justice organization like CPJ; I couldn't articulate an answer. I still can't, really. It was pretty automatic at the time, in the same way as choosing a Christian college and attending church every Sunday were.

As I grow older, I've started to question why I do certain things I've always automatically done, and some of those habits, once examined, get thrown out. But donating my hard-earned money is one habit I've hung on to.

What struck me at the CPJ evening was the preponderance of grey hair in the group. Bruce told me this is typical of CPJ meetings across the country. I was rather surprised. You're a Christian Reformed chaplain, Peter. In your interactions with students raised in the CRC, what level of support do you see for Reformed institutions?

Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth:

You've raised an issue that is of deep concern to me. Our parents and grandparents worked so hard to raise these institutions to the level they are at today. They seem to have been inspired by a grassroots movement that had a very clear vision of what it meant that Jesus Christ was Lord over all creation. But sadly, the generation nurtured in the Canadian Christian schools doesn't seem to have this spark, this passion.

I can tell you two stories. One is of a young mother of three who said to me: "I know all that stuff about Christ 'transforming culture' but it's just too much for me. It's too big. I have enough trouble trying to raise my kids, protecting them from culture." The confidence of our forebears seems to be lacking.

The other is of a child of a CRC minister who asked me, "What is CPJ?" How it could be that he didn't know, I'm not sure, but I suspect the responsibility for that falls in a number of places, including CPJ itself.

Peter

Dear Peter,

If you think CPJ itself may be to blame, why mention that his parent happens to be a CRC minister? Isn't that irrelevant? I'm not letting you get away with that one.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth:

Well, CPJ was started by CRC people, is mostly supported by (and run by) CRC people, and is promoted through CRC channels. I know you're a CRC "preacher's kid" yourself, and I'm not saying that you are somehow more responsible than other CRC young adults. Not at all. I'm just pointing out the irony that someone in so close proximity to CRC leadership might be unaware of something as "Reformed" as CPJ.

Maybe it's not that ironic, though, as it seems many CRC preachers do not preach a gospel that includes the work of organizations like CPJ (such as the Christian Labour Association, the Institute for Christian Studies, and even *Christian Courier*). As I said, responsibility for this generational ignorance/apathy should be spread around quite generously, not least of all to the generation itself.

Peter

Peter,

There is no irony in the situation you describe, only an assumption you made. And you just made another one: why single out the preachers when you said earlier it was the organization's responsibility? I'm pushing you here, but I'm still unclear whom you *really* think is responsible for this apathy.

Two under 35

Peter Schuurman

Elizabeth Salomons

I think the assumptions you've just made only reflect the problem with the CRC community. There are too many assumptions being made all around. It's as if our elders, the pillars of our community, expect certain tenets of the faith to get spread to the next generation by osmosis.

Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth,

Well, I'm suggesting that responsibility cannot be narrowly located — it involves these organizations, the church and the next generation itself. Like any relationship, all parties bear some fault. And the cultural context of these relationships must also be considered: things like the narcissism of consumerism, the pervasive influence of the mass media, and postmodern relativity factor in there, too. What's your theory?

Peter

Dear Peter,

I thought I had already explained my theory: the failure of osmosis. Why is it, when asked why I support an organization like CPJ, I stumble for an answer? I think I'm an articulate person, so why don't these testimonies of faith spring from my mouth?

You say our generation doesn't have the spark or passion for what it means to embrace the implications of Christ's lordship over all of creation. That reminds me of a common plot line I've read in novels or seen on film: parents struggle to make their business a success so they can pass on a legacy to their children, but the children don't want it. Parents and children clash because parents can't understand why children are rejecting what parents spend their lives working to give children. Children can't understand why parents don't understand. Sound familiar?

Isn't that maybe what's happening with the legacy we've inherited from our parents? It hasn't been our struggle to establish our faith in a new country, so we're not as passionate about that legacy. (I should stop generalizing and put in a word for the CPJ staff. I know they are full of passion and dedication, and most of them are my age.)

You use these buzzwords — consumerism, mass media influence, postmodernism — like they were the alphabet. I wonder if it isn't time our generation stopped philosophizing about our changing culture and started redeeming it? Maybe *that's* going to be our struggle.

Elizabeth

Dear Elizabeth,

To be honest, I hope that's not our struggle. There won't be any redemption without some intelligent reflection. And I know this isn't what you're saying, but the redemption is *already happening by God's Spirit*, and I think our calling is to join in and participate with it, not to generate it. This participation, I believe, involves institution maintenance and development, political activism and coalition building, and often *resisting* (not necessarily always transforming) culture. As CPJ is already doing.

I think you're right about this generation eschewing its parents' legacy. But like those Boomers who come back to church after a hiatus in their 20s, I have a sneaking suspicion that some day down the road the spark will ignite again and these institutions will be re-charged with a new vision. It won't be "just like the old days," but there will be a renewing energy that bears the special mark of this generation. I really hope so.

And only God knows what the next generation *after us* will do. . .

Peter

Elizabeth Salomons is a freelance writer who lives in Vancouver. Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Church's chaplain at Brock University. He's a member of Jubilee CRC in St. Catharines.

News Comment

Nose for News



Bert Hielema

I LOOKED UP THE WORD in the dictionary because it did not say anything to me. Of course I know roughly what it means, but somehow I was puzzled by it.

My always open big book told me that the word "impeach" is related to the Latin "impedicare" in which I recognized the word "pedi" for foot. In other words: to be impeached means getting your foot caught in a trap.

Well, Bill Clinton put his foot into his "trap" all right, and now it's stuck there. Clinton seems always to have believed that his mouth was his best weapon and that he could talk himself out of any problem. Not this time. He went a trap too far. At least that is what his opponents think.

AND SADDAM? Bombing Iraq did not give Clinton the needed reprieve; it only proved again that he who lives by the bomb will die by the bomb. Not that Clinton's presidency will die. I think that he will put his notorious charm to work on the wavering politicians in the Senate, who will decide his fate by swiftly voting to censure the President rather than having this sordid affair drag on further. Result: the U.S. now has an impeached President who will sit out his full term.

IN THE MEANTIME the world has become a more dangerous place. Iraq wants revenge, and the ABCs of terrorism — Atomic devices, Biological warfare and Chemical weapons — are now becoming better known. Chances are increasing that small groups of fanatics may cause serious harm to the American population at some point. Russia, Iraq's old ally, is upset; and I wouldn't be surprised if that arch-villain Saddam will hire the Russian Mafia to plant dangerous (perhaps anthrax) bombs in a big American city. Today money can buy everything, the FBI and CIA notwithstanding.

BACK TO THE REAL things of life. There is increasing evidence that caffeine is the perfect drug: a study of healthy coffee drinkers shows that fairly large doses (three to four cups in one sitting) will not hurt one's heart. Well, for the time being, my wife and I will stick to the one cup of gourmet coffee a day which we drink at around 2 o'clock in the afternoon.

HERE IS SOMETHING you never dreamed of reading: with a tug of a necktie, Prince Claus of the Netherlands has touched off a revolution. The 73-year-old husband of the 62-year-old

Queen Beatrix was officially opening a show of African fashions when he suddenly ripped off his royal blue tie, tossed it before the feet of his wife and shouted into the microphone, "A snake around my neck." This earned him a standing ovation.

So finally Prince Claus has come into his own. He has even spawned a new concept: "Claustrophilia" — for denouncing what some men call "the dog leash-neck tie which symbolizes a definite limit on freedom." I almost met him once when we were attending a conference in the Hague of for Dutch people living abroad ("Nederlanders in de Vreemde"). The Prince was supposed to open the conference, but could not because he was suffering from depression. The tie may have been the cause. Hurray for a liberated prince.

THERE IS ANOTHER hero currently — "the Prince of Egypt," Moses. A new film about that "prince" is seemingly so important that *Time* and *USA Today* reported on it extensively. Now people in North America have a chance to turn away from the evil spectacle in Washington and see a film full of heart and hope and miracles. We all know about Moses, of course, the man who was called by God to lead the oppressed people of Israel out of Egypt, the house of bondage, and later was called a prophet and "friend of God." The film passed inspection with 600 leading scholars of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Islamic traditions. Even Jerry Falwell could find no fault. "Hollywood got this one right," he told *Time*.

OPINIONS ON ITS merits are divided, of course (for the opinion of CC's reviewer, see p. 7 of this issue). The films creator, Jeffrey Katzenberg of DreamWorks (Steven Spielberg's company), has taken a few liberties with the story, but then few people read the many Bibles they own, and even fewer know the Bible well, so will anybody care? The film is, so I am told, good entertainment and bad theology. Well, what else is new? I know of scores of churches that present the same thing each Sunday.

CANADA, FOR NOW, has banned the hormone that

increases milk production in cows. It is becoming increasingly plain that we are in the midst of a transition from the Industrial Age to the Biotech Century. After thousands of years in which we used wood and stones and ores to create useful things, we are now using living material to make commercial goods (or "bads").

Genes are becoming a capitalist commodity, and large companies are patenting human chromosomes, cells, tissues and organs for not only public use but the pursuit of profit. I believe that we are toying with the very nature of life here. I call upon Christian experts to reflect on this development and give us guidance. It seems to me that at stake is the our place as human beings created in the image of God. Any wisdom out there concerning this development?

HERE IS A STATISTIC you might have missed. The joint wealth of the world's three richest persons is greater than the combined gross domestic product of the 48 poorest countries — a quarter of the world's states. Everybody knows that fiscal inequality has increased over the past 20 years. In 1960, the income of the 20 per cent of the world's population living in the richest countries was 30 times greater than that of the 20 per cent in the poorest countries. Now it is 90 times greater.

Half of the world's population live on less than \$2 a day. Is this the way it has to be? The UN calculates that the world's populations basic needs for food, drinking water, education and medical care could be covered by a levy of less than four per cent on the accumulated wealth of the 225 largest fortunes. If it is that simple, I am glad not to be one of those rich: the responsibility is simply too great.

Solomon, who would have been counted among these 225, wrote a long time ago: "Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread." That's all we are asked to pray for in the Lord's Prayer. To satisfy all the world's sanitation and food requirements would cost only \$13 billion, hardly as much as the people in North America and Europe spend each year on perfume.

THIS YEAR 1999, will see a lot more corporate restructuring, which really means a lot of people will lose their jobs. Just imagine the in-fighting as people struggle to stay in their offices or work positions, making others to be the fall guys.

In the coming decade the average person starting employment can expect to change jobs at least 11 times and learn a new basic skill base at least three times during those 40 years of labor.

That requires a totally different outlook on life. No wonder people are becoming more tense. Also, many are haunted by a sense that they cannot provide sufficiently for their children, not only for the necessities of life but also the proper life skills. It's hard to build loyalty and trust when large companies hire and fire people at a whim, for mostly short-term gain, eroding basic human commitment.

This sort of short-term capitalism threatens to corrode the sort of character traits which binds human beings to one another. These "flexible" working conditions mean that most workers and their children will be the losers. In the long run this means trouble ahead. And if you know that your company will transfer you on a whim, how much energy do you invest into your friendships? Your community? Your relationship with local wildlife and trees?

HERE IS SOMETHING that makes no sense to me: tests have shown that people driving in a fog, rather than slowing down and being more careful, increase their speed. Tests also have determined that unhappy workers comfort themselves by buying things they know they don't need.

Therein lies the answer to the success of the North American consumer miracle: it is based on lack of community ties, lack of faith, lack of friends, and lack of loyalty to spouses and causes. A pretty shaky foundation, I think.

Well, you always learn something new when you nose around for news.

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Bert Hielema feels sometimes guilty for having lived and worked when working conditions and benefits were much better. He's living with his guilt in the rural town of Tweed, Ontario.

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	<p>Anniversaries</p>	<p>PETERBOROUGH, Ont.: Rhema Christian School invites applications for a maternity leave teaching position beginning in mid-March of 1999. Applicants need to be qualified teachers and demonstrate a love for God, a love for students and love for teaching. If you are a qualified Christian teacher, interested in joining our dynamic Christian staff, please send a resume to:</p> <p>Mr. Ray Hendriks, Principal 3195 Parkhill Rd. E. Peterborough, ON K9L 1B8 Fax: (705) 743-1415</p>		
	<p></p> <p>Samia, Ont. St. Catharines, Ont. 1958 1998</p> <p>"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4).</p> <p>STAN and CORRIE DE JONG (nee SMIT) celebrated their 40th anniversary on Dec. 27, 1998. Their grateful children and grandchildren: Anita & Dave Sikkema — St. Catharines, Ont. Christine & Marc Radsma, Joe, Dave, Jim, Mitch Wynne & John Watt — Toronto, Ont. Kevin & Heather de Jong — Owen Sound, Ont. Rachel, Zachary Paul & Nycole de Jong — Calgary Alta. Address: 2 Sullivan Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 1K2</p>	<p>ST. CATHARINES, Ont.: Beacon Chr. High School invites applications for a maternity leave position in the area of English and drama beginning in mid-March of 1999. Applicants need to be qualified and need to demonstrate a love for God, a love for students, and a love for English. Please send resume and relevant information to:</p> <p>Ted Harris, Principal Beacon Chr. High School 2 O'Malley Drive St. Catharines, ON L2N 6N7 Fax: (905) 937-1130</p>		
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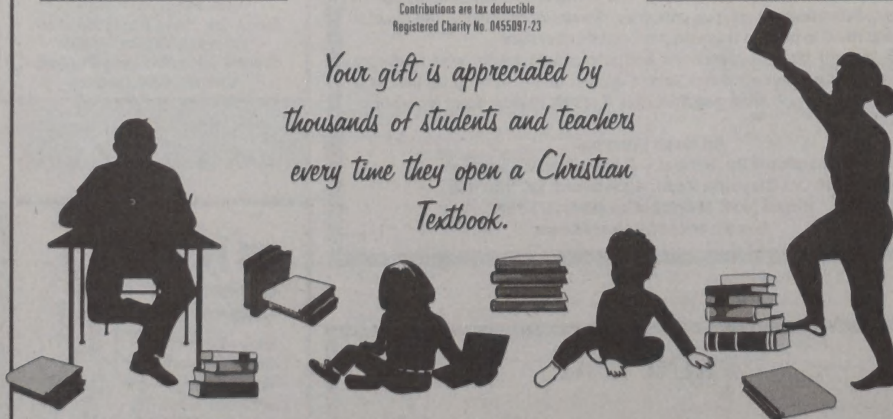


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Media

Do we want more G-rated movies?

Ted Baehr

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — The long-term study of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) ratings by the prestigious Dove Foundation falls short on several counts. First, who wants more G-rated films if those G-rated films are full of spiritism, occultism and magical thinking? So far, the public has rejected most of those types of films, even when they were extraordinarily well-produced, such as *Ferngully*.

When people of faith endorse movies that portray such practices in a positive light, they display a lukewarmness which revolts God. Of course, the Good News is that we live in grace, but that does not excuse antinomianism.

Indeed, the movies that do best don't do best because they are G-rated, but because they contain a Christian worldview. For the last few years, films with a strong Christian worldview — whatever their rating — have done much better at the box office than those with a non-Christian worldview. Per-

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Is this the kind of family film audiences want?

haps this is because 40 to 60 per cent of the population attends church on Sunday, whereas only five per cent visit movie theatres.

To evaluate or attend movies

from only an MPAA ratings point of view ignores the important life issues that are being played out in the cultural battles of the late 20th century.

Furthermore, the figures based on ratings only hint at what most savvy people already realize. From 1979 to 1989, 77 million new Americans were born. This "baby-kaboom" generation, as *Time* magazine calls them, sought out *Little Mermaid* and *Lion King* when they were seven and are now

starting to seek out *Scream* and *There's Something About Mary*, as they are becoming teenagers.

Only the foolhardy would aim films at seven-year-olds when the demographic wave has passed, and Hollywood may pander to the public with dumb and dumber films, but it does not suffer fools lightly. Thus, DreamWorks is putting a PG on all its animated films, trying to keep up with that demographic wave.

Finally, to include [in the ratings analysis] the many independently distributed films that share in less than one or two per cent of the box office each year inherently undermines a study of ratings.

I am not talking about films produced independently and distributed by a major studio or one of its divisions; rather, I refer to the small independent distribution companies who congregate at the American Film Market.

These companies put out a preponderance of R-rated movies. Most can only open a movie in a small theatre for one week. These movies make so little money that they drag down the average box office statistics for R-rated films. Additionally, they distribute almost half of the movies released each year and about two-thirds of the movies submitted to the MPAA for ratings. Including them in any ratings average is a smart choice for someone with an agenda, but

it presents a skewed picture to the public, and Hollywood knows better.

When three out of four of Disney's top-grossing films are R-rated, they understand the economics of the box office and don't need doctored figures to revise their point of view. The intelligent and ethical way to consider this matter is to throw out human-made methods of classification and look at the entertainment industry through biblical principles. Then, a very vivid picture emerges, but it is not the picture being presented in the MPAA ratings study.

Do we North Americans want more G-rated films? Probably not. We do want more films that conform to the values and the principles of the faith of our forebears, given to us by the wonderful Creator who first gave us the ability to accurately classify all things in accordance with his loving will.

It is unfortunate that many people have been misled by Hollywood's self-appointed ratings experts. "What you see is what you get..." — not what you are told you are seeing!

Ted Baehr is chairperson of the Christian Film and Television Commission. For information about *Movieguide*, which is compiled by Dr. Baehr, or about *The Media-Wise Family*, his latest book, please call (770)-825-0084; or write: MOVIEGUIDE, 2510-G Las Posas Road, Suite 502, Camarillo, CA 93010.

Prince of Egypt creators wrestled with voice of God

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (EP) — One of the biggest questions confronting the creators of *The Prince of Egypt* was how to portray the voice of God which Moses hears when he sees the burning bush.

"We knew at the beginning that we didn't want to do a big, booming James Earl Jones kind of thing," said co-director Brenda Chapman. "We had worked so hard to make Moses accessible as a human being, and if God was going to be accessible to Moses — and therefore to the audience — we knew we would have to try something different."

The team spent close to a year discussing different ideas for God's voice. One was to use the voices of other characters in the movie — having God speak with the voices of people Moses loved and respected.

Too beautiful, too mechanical

"We had all the actors record the God dialogue, and our editor did this beautiful rendition that had these voices blending

together, weaving in and out of one another," said Chapman. "It was beautiful. But it was so beautiful that you weren't listening to what was being said."

Co-director Simon Wells added, "The other problem is that there is only one God, and to have many voices presents a theological problem."

Audio processing software was used to blend all of the voices into one voice. The result? "It sounded like Hal [the computer] from *2001*," said Chapman.

Finally, the team decided to use an electronically altered version of the voice of Val Kilmer, who also supplied the voice of Moses. Wells explains, "We looked for philosophical help, and found many writings which say God speaks to each person in the way in which they are most capable of understanding, or speaks in a voice that is non-threatening. We ended up using Val's voice, but treating it so it doesn't sound like he's talking to himself."

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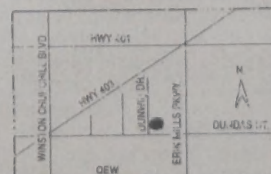
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News

Small Christian university offers world travel

Alan Doerksen

ST. STEPHEN, New Brunswick — With only 50 full-time students, St. Stephen's University (SSU) is one of the smallest in Canada, but its programs involve travel to the far corners of

St. Stephen, SSU is still a young institution. Founded in 1971, the university offered its first classes in 1975 and held its first convocation in 1979.

But this year, SSU marked two important milestones: its 20th annual convocation, and the provincial charter that gave the university the power to grant degrees.

Don Kantel, SSU president, was pleased with how quickly the New Brunswick legislature gave unanimous approval to the charter. He explains that SSU first approached the government about the subject in 1997. By February 1998, the charter had been granted.

There are no strings attached to the provincial charter, Kantel explains. "Part of our application specifically exempted us from provincial funding. We don't want to be put into a position of receiving funding from the province and being responsible to the province.... Our accountability is to people who support this ministry."

Asia, Europe and Africa

Besides tuition fees, SSU is funded by individuals in the Christian community, explains Kantel. Besides its Bachelor of Arts program, SSU has a



Todd Hall, part of the St. Stephen's University campus.

Bachelor of Ministry and Master of Ministry program.

World travel is something that sets apart SSU from many other universities, especially small ones in a small city. The university students get to travel in Europe, Asia and even Africa as part of their studies.

"Typically, the Europe trip spends time in France, Spain, Italy and England," with possible stops in Germany and Austria, says Kantel, who leads the European study tours.

French language development is a prominent part of the term in Europe. Students spend one month studying French in the Alpine lakeside city of Annecy, in southeastern France. Students also contact a number of Christian ministries active in Europe.

A second term of the BA involves travel to Asia, visiting such places as China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Hong Kong.

The travel units of the BA program are designed to help expand students' awareness of needs and opportunities in the world. Students stay together while traveling to enhance their growth as a Christian community, an SSU brochure explains. The trips help students to become "world Christians."

Students in the Bachelor of Ministry program get to take a two-week trip to Israel. And this February for the first time, some SSU students will travel to

Africa for a 10-week study tour to visit locations in Uganda, Egypt, Kenya, Mozambique and South Africa, Kantel reports. "We have a strong commitment at SSU to the value of educational travel," he asserted in his latest president's report.

Despite its name, St. Stephen's University is not connected with the Roman Catholic Church or any other single denomination. The faculty includes members of Presbyterian, Anglican and Vineyard churches, and students come from a variety of denominations, including Roman Catholic. Kantel describes SSU as a non-denominational Christian university with a biblical focus.

Even though the university is in the heart of the Maritimes less than half of its students come from that region. Out of 50 full-time students, most — 22 — come from Ontario; 19 come from the Maritimes, six from the Prairies, one from Quebec and three from the U.S. There are also 30 part-time students.



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News Digest

Sumerian rock 'n' roll

HELSINKI — Finnish academic Jukka Ammond, who has already sung Elvis hits in Latin, is to record rock 'n' roll in Sumerian, a very dead language from ancient Mesopotamia.

Prof. Ammond, of the University of Jyväskylä, says that Sumerian is "relatively easy to pronounce for a Finn." Its sounds are vaguely reminiscent of "some sort of African."

The professor's interests are not unique in Finland, which has a passion for dead languages. Radio Finland broadcasts a weekly news bulletin in Latin, reports the *Globe and Mail*.

Evangelism to homeless gamblers

LAS VEGAS (religion-today.com) — Evangelists are preaching to the homeless in Las Vegas. Workers for Youth With a Mission and members of 16 local churches rent portions of parking lots on private property near the Strip, the city's gambling area. More than 80 people, including a gambling addict who had become a male prostitute, have become Christians because of the outreach, YWAM International News Digest said. The evangelists also sing and present dramas. Las Vegas has many homeless people, many of whom have ended up on the street because of gambling. YWAM plans to start a "street cafe" to provide free food for some of them.

To catch a bully

CONNECTICUT — Specially marked bills helped police catch a teenage thief in Connecticut, reports the *Globe and Mail*. Recently, the mother of a mentally handicapped teenager in Connecticut learned from him that a schoolyard bully was threatening him with a knife every day and taking his lunch money. So she wrote his name in black marker on two bills and gave them to her son. The bully took the money and struck the youth with a hat because it wasn't enough, police said. The mother went to her son's school and asked the principal to check the bully's pockets. A student has been charged with larceny by extortion and assault.



Don Kantel, president of SSU.

the world. And as of a few months ago, it has the power to grant government-recognized Bachelor and Master's degrees.

SSU occupies several eye-catching historical properties in the small, picturesque town of St. Stephen, New Brunswick. At first glance, the campus looks more like several fine homes than a university. Although based in historical buildings in

Tuberculosis now a 'serious epidemic' in Russia

Xenia Dennen

MOSCOW, Russia (Keston News Service) — The situation in Russian prisons is getting worse, according to a missionary in Moscow. Steve Reuter, president of the Moscow mission Liberty Through Jesus, said that he is particularly concerned about the spread of tuberculosis, which according to a Russian assistant director of prisons has reached epidemic proportions.

The Protestant missionary's concerns were echoed by Father Georgi Edelshstein of the Russian Orthodox Church's Diocese of Kostroma, about 200 miles northeast of Moscow. Edelshstein said that he meets prisoners with tuberculosis every day. "There is indeed a tuberculosis epidemic, I would say a serious one," he said. He regularly visits a strict-regime penal colony in the Kostroma region, and there he has met many inmates afflicted with this disease.

Pastor Reuter gave Keston excerpts from a letter from a Russian prison official, whose

identity he withheld. The letter states: "The disease of tuberculosis is out of control, and constantly growing in prisons. In 1995, tuberculosis grew by 38 per cent, in 1996 by 31 per cent, in 1997 by 13 per cent and in the first six months of the current year by another 29 per cent. The occurrence of tuberculosis in prisons is five times higher than the norm in Russia."

There are no resources to fund medical treatment, claims the writer; in his region 2,500 prisoners have tuberculosis. "Actual analysis shows that in our region, 17 per cent of prisoners have tuberculosis. In other words, one in every six."

Pastor Reuter is now appealing to the West for help. On December 10, Keston spoke by telephone to Mikhail Perin, head of the medical department of the Main Administration for Prisons, who refused to acknowledge that there is a tuberculosis epidemic and would give no figures or any other information on the subject.